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THE LIFE

OF

MICHAEL ANGELO BUONARROTI.

VOL. I.

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MICHAEL ANGELO BUONARROTI.

FROM THE ENGRAVING BY BONASONE

THE

LIFE

OF

MICHAEL ANGELO BUONARROTI;

WITH TRANSLATIONS OF MANY OF HIS

Poems and Letters.

ALSO,

MEMOIRS

OF

SAVONAROLA, RAPHAEL, AND VITTORIA COLONNA.

B.2559.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1857

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PREFACE.

THE claims of Michael Angelo to admiration as an Artist, have been forcibly pourtrayed by numerous writers; but his great qualities as a man, present a wide field for further illustration. It has been my aim throughout the following Biography fully to do justice to him in each of these capacities. And, though it may appear difficult to add to the force of all that a Flaxman and a Reynolds, a Lomazzo and a Fuseli, have so ably written upon the characteristics of his art, I trust it may be found that the subject is not wholly exhausted, but that writers, following in their train, may be able to glean precious materials in the same field of criticism. There is, for example, one branch of critical investigation connected with the mental history of this great man, which is full of interest, but which has

hitherto been imperfectly touched upon. I refer to the intimate alliance which may be traced between the lofty tendencies of his Art and of his Poetry, and to the powerful influence exercised upon both, by the Platonic philosophy, a deep attachment to which he appears to have imbibed in early youth, through an intimate connection with the Platonic Academy of Florence. As to the greater part of its members, their connection with it was little more than a piece of fashionable homage to Lorenzo de' Medici, its great patron and supporter; but in the case of Michael Angelo, and some few others, it was different. Steering clear of the absurd puerilities mixed up with its theories, he seized upon the grand notions which more or less belong to every form of Platonism, and with them impregnated both his Art and his Poetry. This being the case, I have deemed it expedient to trace out the sources of his Platonic habits of thought and speculation, in the chapter upon his Poetry, and also to give a detailed account of the Academy itself, and of the sort of influence which it exercised in Florence. The subject is full of interest, and has been little more than glanced at by Roscoe, in his biographies of the Medici family.

My aim throughout these volumes has been to

render them interesting, not only to the artist, but to general readers, and to the literary world, by developing Michael Angelo's character, artistic and social, political and religious; and by proving him to have been in each of these particulars, equally worthy of esteem and admiration. His social character, it is true, has been ably illustrated by his biographers Condivi and Vasari, who enjoyed the privilege of his intimate friendship, and published their memoirs of him, in his own life-time. These pages will be found to combine all the most interesting facts recorded by them, as well as much matter collected from other sources.

Vasari, however, was a worshipper of the rising sun of the new dynasty of the Medici, founded by Charles V. in the year 1530, after his conquering sword had annihilated the last vestiges of Florentine freedom. In defence of that freedom, Michael Angelo risked fortune, friends, and life itself, and never regarded the new order of things with complacency, in spite of the personal respect and gratitude he felt towards Duke Cosmo I. in return for all the homage and kindness vouchsafed to him by that Prince. On the patriotic merits, therefore, of M. Angelo, Vasari dared not to speak out, neither did Condivi venture into this arena of politics.

I have endeavoured to do full justice to the part which he acted at that memorable period, which was in fact the death-struggle of Florentine liberty. It commenced soon after the decease of Lorenzo de' Medici, and one of its most stirring partisans was the celebrated Savonarola, whose eventful history, therefore, reflects much light on the early stages of that struggle: even after his death, the enthusiasm which he had awakened in favour of constitutional government continued for many years to be felt in Florence, and to keep at bay the efforts of the Medici to regain their lost power. Michael Angelo always thought and spoke of Savonarola with affectionate veneration, and highly prized his religious writings. A memoir of him, therefore, forms a natural episode to the present biography, and though it has extended to a length beyond my original purpose, I believe it will not be deemed out of place.

The religious character of Michael Angelo is another topic of deep interest, which has never yet been duly developed. This I have attempted to elucidate by such an arrangement of his Poetry, as shall make him, himself, unfold to the reader the various phases of religious sentiment and opinion which marked his manhood and his old age. It will be found, that he has faithfully opened the

inmost workings of his heart, and claims our veneration in virtue of sentiments and principles of the most enlightened piety.

The bright ray shed upon his later days by his intimacy with Vittoria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, and the charm attached to her character, will, I conceive, render a memoir of that illustrious lady interesting and acceptable to the reader.

The facts of her life necessarily embrace a reference to the inchoate but finally extinguished Reformation in Italy, — a subject which I have endeavoured to treat with truth and impartiality.

My readers will, I am sure, be gratified by the insertion of a translation of Chevalier Bunsen's ingenious and tasteful dissertation on the original arrangement of Raphael's Tapestries in the Sistine Chapel.

The author has himself, in a separate work, attempted to illustrate the genius of M. Angelo by a series of highly finished engravings from his works, pictorial and architectural.*

* The Engravings referred to are, — A Chromo Lithograph of the Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, 3 feet 5 inches long by 1 foot 6½ inches wide, — published by Colnaghi and Co.; — also "Illustrations, Architectural and Pictorial, of the Genius of Michael Angelo," folio, published by Messrs. Colnaghi and Co., and Messrs. Longman and Co.

In Italian names familiar to the English public, the anglicised form of spelling is generally adopted; for instance, Raphael instead of Raffaelle, Michael Angelo instead of Michel Agnolo; but in the case of names not thus familiar, the usual Italian orthography is adhered to.

J. S. H.

Blaise Castle,
Jan. 1857.

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ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. 214. — The medal for which Michael Angelo suggested the reverse, of a blind man led by a dog, as an emblem of Savonarola, with the motto "Docebo iniquas vias tuas," &c., was the medal of himself in his old age, executed by Leone Leoni, — not that of Savonarola.

The ambiguity with which the authority referred to at the bottom of page 214 alludes to it, has occasioned the error which this note is meant to correct.

Vol. I. p. 28, last line.—*For* the "Church of San Marco at Florence," *read* "Church of Santa Maria, Novella."

Vol. I. p. 116, line 7.—*For* "d'Agincourt" *read* "Cicognara."

LIFE

OF

MICHAEL ANGELO BUONARROTI.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF MICHAEL ANGELO. — EARLY INDICATIONS OF HIS ARTISTIC POWERS. — IS APPRENTICED TO D. GHIRLANDAJO. — HIS RAPID ADVANCE IN ART.

1474 TO 1489.

"LET it not," says Vasari, "excite surprise, that though professing to decline writing the lives of artists my contemporaries, I have undertaken that of Michael Angelo. It is a slight and merited tribute to one whose name can never die. When, in common with other men, his mortal frame shall perish, he will be immortal in his immortal works, the fame of which, so long as the world endures, will gloriously survive in the records and on the lips of men, in contempt of envy, and in despite of death."

The honours decreed to celebrated men by their contemporaries have often been subsequently reversed; but, in the present instance, the glowing eulogy of Vasari has, in the main, only anticipated the sober judgment of posterity.

Michael Angelo was born in the diocese of Arezzo, in Tuscany, on the 6th of March, 1474, in the Castle of Chiusi and Caprese, of which his father was podestà, or governor, for that year.

Lodovico di Lionardo Buonarroti Simoni, the father, was descended from the ancient and noble family of the Counts of Canossa. His mother was Francesca, daughter of Neri di Miniato del Sera and Maria Bonda Rucellai.

In spite of the advancing learning and intelligence of the fifteenth century, judicial astrology, prolific parent of lying wonders, still exercised a despotic sway over the hopes and fears, not only of the ignorant multitude, but also of the highest and the most educated classes. Sovereigns and statesmen, historians and poets, even grave philosophers, beheld in the starry heavens not so much a display of the glory of God as an open volume in which the future destinies of the human race, and their own in particular, were to be traced by infallible inferences derived from the positions, conjunctions, and changes of the planets. No wonder, then, that the parents of the infant Buonarroti listened with fond credulity to the professors of the occult science, who assured them that a favour-

able conjunction of the planets Mars and Venus, which occurred at the hour of his birth, was a sure presage of his future greatness.

The year of the father's official duties having expired, he returned to Florence, and put out his son to nurse with a stonemason's wife living near his villa of Settignano, about three miles from Florence. "George," said Michael Angelo to Vasari in after life, "whatever of acrid my temper may have in it, I ascribe to the keen air of your hills of Arezzo; and as to my chisel and mallet, I conclude that my love for them was imbibed with my foster-mother's milk."

As Lionardo's family was numerous, and his means were scanty, he brought up some of his sons to the silk or woollen trade; but discerning in his son Michael decisive indications of superior talents, he destined him for one of the learned professions, and with this view sent him to the grammar school of Francesco Urbino in Florence.

Here, however, his progress was not satisfactory; for, though his abilities were unquestionable, his heart was not with his books. In fact, the youthful predilections of Pascal for mathematical science, and of Petrarch for elegant literature, were not more decisive than those of Michael Angelo for the art of design. His delight, even in childhood, was to handle a pencil, and to attempt to give expression with it to the creations of his fancy, or to

the illustration of his sentiments and feelings.* Every day the disposition gathered strength, till at length he spent most of the hours which he could call his own, and many which ought to have been devoted to school exercises, in this fascinating pursuit. His father and nearest relatives, who had probably in the first instance surveyed his drawings with complacency and interest, now beheld in them the indications of a passion

* A. F. Gori, in his annotations on Condivi, states that the senator Filippo Buonarroti had shown him many early drawings of Michael Angelo's, some on the walls of the upper story of the Casa Buonarroti in Florence, others on those of the family villa at Settignano. "To this villa the Cavaliere Buonarroti kindly conveyed me in his carriage; and I was not a little amused on entering it to find myself seated opposite to a gentleman, to whom he introduced me as Michael Angelo Buonarroti, his cousin. The villa is about three miles distant from Florence; and from the open gallery which surrounds it there are beautiful views of that city and its vicinage. Here the father of the great artist *really lived*, and we entered with becoming interest. It appears to be much in the state in which it was in the fifteenth century. The house is of moderate size, and surrounded by vineyards. On the wall of the staircase, enclosed now in folding doors, is a fine sketch of Michael Angelo's in black chalk, much injured by the ravages of 300 years and want of attention, though, during the last eighty years, as we were told, it has been well taken care of. It is full of life and spirit, and represents a man with his head rather thrown backward, his right arm elevated and admirably foreshortened; his fingers are holding something which, I think from their position, and that of his *mouth*, must have been a reed or wind instrument of music. The body is finely drawn, and terminates just beneath the waist. From the garden we looked on heights still sprinkled with snow, beneath which lay *Vallombrosa*."

which, unless promptly checked, would obtain the mastery over him, and mar all their schemes for his future advancement. Great pains were therefore taken to induce him to lay aside his pencil, excepting by way of occasional recreation; but the entreaties and remonstrances of his friends proved ineffectual, and at length his irritated father, finding the rule that he had laid down continually broken, insisted, as the only remedy, that he should give up drawing altogether. Possibly this stern inhibition was for a short time obeyed; but evidence of its infraction quickly reached Lionardo's ears, who next attempted to enforce his commands by personal correction.* Here, however, he signally failed: that firmness of purpose which afterwards characterised the man already showed itself in the boy: nature proved invincible, and her influence was strengthened by an intimacy which he had formed with Francesco Granacci, a youthful Florentine painter and pupil of Domenico Ghirlandajo. He lent him drawings, took him to see the finest objects of art in Flo-

* Condivi and Vasari agree in stating that he was very severely treated by his father and uncle, in order to expel this devotion to art: — "Onde dal padre e da' fratelli del padre, i quali tal arte in odio avevano, ne fu mal voluto, e bene spesso stranamente battuto." — *Condivi, Vita di M. A. Buonarroti*, cap. 5. "Tutto il tempo, che poteva mettere di nascoso, lo consumava nel disegnare, essendo perciò e dal padre, e da suoi maggiori gridato, e tal volta battuto." — *Vasari, Vita di M. A. Buonarroti*, p. 4., edit. 4to, Roma, 1760.

rence, introduced him to his master, and did all in his power to foster the development of his genius. The friendship thus commenced in mutual sympathy and personal regard, proved one for life. Granacci ere long beheld the young friend whom he had thus taken by the hand, breaking through every obstacle till he reached the highest pinnacle of art.

The struggle between the father and the son was at length amicably concluded. Lionardo, finding there was no hope of his efficient application to the course of reading and study proper to the learned professions, at length, though very reluctantly, yielded to his wishes, and consented to his becoming the pupil of Ghirlandajo. Family pride had much influenced his opposition. The art of painting had not yet attained that high place in public estimation which was subsequently asserted for it by his son's pre-eminent genius, and by that of a Da Vinci and a Raphael. Neither did it hold out, like commerce, flattering promises of pecuniary profit. He therefore deemed it a profession unworthy of his noble descent, and involving a forfeiture of caste, without sufficient counterbalancing advantages.

The contract with Ghirlandajo was for an apprenticeship of three years. Vasari has preserved a copy of the indenture, which covenants for the pupil to receive six gold florins for the first year, eight for the second, and ten for the third. That the master should have been willing to commence with

a payment instead of receiving a fee, indicates a high estimate of the pupil's powers.

Domenico Corradi, called Ghirlandajo from his father's trade, who was a goldsmith and also a vendor of garlands, took the lead at this time among the Florentine painters. He likewise excelled in the art of mosaic. He was born in 1451, and died in 1495. His pupils were numerous, and several of them attained to high professional eminence. The reputation he enjoyed had led Sixtus IV. to employ him, in common with Pietro Perugino and some other able artists, in decorating the Sistine Chapel with paintings in fresco.

Within the walls of the convent of San Marco at Florence, a cœnaculum by him is to be seen, which is excellent both in design and colour. The church of the Trinità in that city contains one of his best compositions, the subject being the Death of St. Francis. In the Palazzo Vecchio are to be seen some specimens of his art, as also in the cathedrals of Pisa and Lucca. His oil paintings are of frequent occurrence in the picture galleries of Italy, and are in general distinguished by much of appropriate sentiment and picturesque treatment. But of all his numerous works a series of frescoes in the church of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence, are the finest. The style of this church, which Michael Angelo used to call in fondness "his Bride," is Italian Gothic of the fifteenth century. In spite of numerous modern incongruities

the interior still exhibits striking evidences of its having originally been a very fine specimen of this style of architecture.

The frescoes in question are situated in a chapel or choir which forms the terminating apse of the church. The light is bad, and the back of a vast modern altar-piece intercepts much of that which the frescoes once enjoyed. They are divided into compartments, the greater number of which occupy the lofty walls to the right and left of the windows. One side represents the History of St. John the Baptist; the other that of the Virgin. Among them is the Slaughter of the Innocents, so highly eulogised by Vasari: but this picture has nearly perished. The various subjects are treated with much force and originality.

Ghirlandajo was among the first of the Florentine school who, by a superior knowledge of the science of perspective, imparted due depth to his compositions. The varied and dramatic expression of his heads, the easy attitudes of his principal figures, and the breadth and disposition of his draperies, indicate that he had profited, like many of his contemporaries, by a careful study of the works of Masaccio. There is much in common between these artists. His subsidiary groups are often replete with portraits of the great men of his day, which impart to them a peculiar interest, and divest them of mannerism. Those of Lorenzo de' Medici, Politian, Marsiglio Ficino, Christoforo Lan-

dini, and Ghirlandajo himself, are among those most carefully pointed out to strangers. Some of the most celebrated beauties who then graced the circles of Florence, are also to be found among them, habited in the costume of their age, which, though not strictly appropriate, scarcely offends the eye of taste, since the general style of dress did not then partake of the extravagances of more modern fashion. The compartment called the Naming of the Virgin, contains a set of these female beauties, among whom the charming face of Ginevra di Benci is conspicuous. Ghirlandajo had the additional merit of rejecting, like Masaccio, from his works the favourite appendages of gold nimbuses and tinsel fringes. His colouring is rich, deep, and harmonious. What he wanted to raise him to the highest dignity of art was a grander and purer outline, and a closer approximation, in the conception of his scriptural characters and subjects, to the devout and ideal sentiment of the Giottesque school.

Under this able master, Michael Angelo's progress was such, that he was soon employed in painting from his designs, parts of the frescoes above described, in the choir of Santa Maria Novella. Tradition points out various figures among them as in this sense unquestionably his, but without sufficient evidence. His genius, seconded by assiduous application, soon became so matured, that he found it difficult to confine him-

self to mere copying, or to resist the impulse of that creative fancy which was perpetually prompting him to attempt original composition. Struck one day with the feeble drawing of a figure in a cartoon of Ghirlandajo's, which a pupil was copying, he seized the porte crayon, and drew round it, with masterly precision, a correct and vigorous outline, which, preserving the character of the original, invested it with new and appropriate energy. We are not informed how his master received this piece of practical criticism, though we should have been willing to believe that feelings of admiration of his pupil's genius softened any emotions of just displeasure at his presumption, had not Condivi stated in strong terms that he viewed his progress with envy, and withheld from him privileges to which he was fairly entitled.* His friend Granacci carefully preserved the drawing which thus early indicated the boy's confidence in his own powers. He subsequently gave it to Vasari, who showed it to Michael Angelo at Rome in the year 1556. "I almost think," he modestly observed, on looking at it, "that I knew more of art in my youth than I do in my old age."

During his master's absence from Santa Maria on another occasion, he made so graphic and correct a drawing of some of the principal artists employed upon the frescoes, together with the

* Condivi, cap. 5.

desks, the scaffolding, and the other implements of pictorial art which surrounded them, that Ghirlandajo, on his return, struck by its truth and vigour, could not repress the involuntary exclamation, "*This youth already knows more of Art than I do myself.*"

Wonderful things are also told of the accuracy, both as to handling and style, with which he imitated the drawings of various old masters; so much so, that, with the addition of artificial means to give them the character of age, they imposed even on practised connoisseurs. Vasari specially dilates on an old portrait which he copied with such exact truth, that it was mistaken for the original. His biographers mention, among other instances of his assiduous application, his special care in attending to the minutest details which entered into his subjects: for instance, in painting a picture founded on a design of Albert Durer, or Martin Schoens, representing the temptations of St. Anthony (to which he had added many grotesque figures of demons and monsters), he had to introduce a group of fishes, and wishing to be true to nature, he went to the fish-market, and made drawings of the eyes and fins of various species both living and dead, which he transferred with the greatest effect to his canvass. It was thus that, even in his early youth, he aimed at uniting vigour of design with correctness of detail.

While thus pursuing his studies, the friendship

between himself and Granacci suffered no abatement. Scarcely any one out of his immediate family was as dear to him as the friend who had so generously fostered his dawning genius, and who, so far from regarding his subsequent good fortune and advancing fame with any feelings akin to jealousy, took the deepest interest in both, and finally became, as it were, the scholar of his early pupil, by making his great works the principal model of his imitation.

CHAPTER II.

IS PATRONISED BY LORENZO DE' MEDICI, WHO GIVES HIM A HOME IN HIS PALACE.— CHARACTER, TASTES, AND PURSUITS OF LORENZO.

1489 TO 1490.

THE talents of the future great man have often been first brought into public notice by circumstances apparently fortuitous, but which deserve to be deemed providential; for the same beneficent Wisdom which calls into being superior minds for the furtherance of human improvement, is prolific of means the best adapted to their future development, and to their efficient instrumentality.

Great as were the talents of the youthful Buonarroti, they might have failed of their adequate culture, or he might have long and vainly toiled at the foot of the arduous steep,

"The steep where Fame's proud Temple shines afar,"

had he not unexpectedly found, at the time of which we write, a generous patron, and an enlightened counsellor, in the most illustrious Italian of his age, Lorenzo de' Medici, surnamed the Magnificent. The names of Lorenzo and of his grandfather Cosmo, are honourably and indissolubly associated with the restoration of learning in the fifteenth

century, and with the varied train of causes and events which at that period rendered Italy the central point of intellectual light to the rest of Europe. Florence, in particular, enriched by their commercial enterprise, embellished by their taste and liberality, and rendered by their assiduous patronage of learning and art, the resort of celebrated men from most parts of Christendom, shone resplendent among the other polished cities of Italy, and merited the flattering title assigned to it of the "Modern Athens."

Lorenzo, now in the prime of manhood, and exercising in the Florentine state functions almost regal under a republican title, was beloved by his fellow-citizens for his social qualities, and honoured throughout Italy and Europe for his political wisdom and sagacity. The respect and confidence with which he inspired foreign governments had frequently enabled him to exercise such an influence on their counsels, as to avert impending calamities from his own country, and harmoniously to adjust jarring and rival interests amongst the numerous states of the Italian peninsula.

His life, divided between the important duties of head of the Florentine Republic, and the studious and retired pursuits of the scholar, the philosopher, and the poet, had been marked by imminent vicissitudes, though on the whole it had been signally prosperous. This prosperity was in no small degree a consequence of his inflexible courage, adroitness,

COSMO DE' MEDICI.

BORN 1389 — DIED 1464

and decision, amidst pressing difficulties, as well as of that personal ascendency which his great qualities and address obtained for him in conference or negotiation with others.

Lorenzo's youth was coeval with the golden age of modern literature. Men of eminent learning conducted his education amidst the most inspiring influences (for all Italy then fermented with literary ardour and enterprise); and he himself imbibed from their lessons, from the example of his family, and from his own innate genius, no small portion of this enthusiasm. The ardour of his grandfather for the furtherance of Greek literature, and especially for the Platonic philosophy, was fully shared by himself. He was not only an elegant classical scholar, but deserves to be regarded as a principal restorer of the Tuscan muse to those high honours which had been won for her by a Dante and a Petrarch, but which had been for nearly a century suspended by the passionate, exclusive, and almost blind devotion of learned men to Roman and Greek literature. Lorenzo's fine taste in Art rendered him fully alive to the exquisite beauties of the early Italian school of painting; but he was no less sensible of its defects in drawing and depth of composition. Masaccio had by his example done much to banish these defects; but Lorenzo, in his zeal to advance the arts of design to still greater perfection, had collected together, within a garden adjoining to the Piazza of San

Marco, many fine specimens of Greek and Roman sculpture, and a variety of pictures and cartoons by some of the greatest Florentine painters, with the view of rendering them easily accessible to students as models of study and imitation. An academy of this description, he trusted, might tend to produce works uniting the sentiment of the early Italian painters with the grace and correct drawing peculiar to the antique. To this collection, students were admitted under due regulation; prize subjects, to be contested for, were proposed; and salaries were awarded to such among them as manifested superior diligence and talent, but needed pecuniary aid. This useful establishment was placed under the superintendence and direction of Bertoldo, a retired sculptor of merit, once a pupil of Donatello. This Museum of Art was broken up, and its objects sold, upon the banishment of the Medici in 1494; but a great part of them were subsequently recovered by the family, and now adorn the Gallery of the Uffizi, in Florence.

That same persevering energy which, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had been so successfully exerted in extracting from the damp recesses and the depths of monastic walls and vaults, the master-pieces of Roman literature, and had recently recovered and borne in triumph from the Byzantine capital and the monasteries of the East, many of those of Greece, had for some time

past been exerted in bringing into light from the remains of classic temples, palaces, and baths, the statues, friezes, and bas-reliefs which once formed the pride and ornament of Rome and its provinces, in her days of imperial splendour. The finest of these were almost exclusively the work of Grecian artists. In the sixteenth century this species of research had become so general and fashionable, that every considerable palace within the Roman States had its museum of statues. As yet, however, this taste had not become thus general, and Lorenzo in this respect, as in many others, was in advance of his age. His grandfather, it is true, had set him the example; for the noble palace erected by Cosmo in his native city, from the designs of Brunelleschi, was, and still is, replete with classical remains arranged by the taste of Donatello. Lorenzo had added much to the collection, and he it was who commenced the noble gallery of statues and pictures which has so long formed the pride and ornament of Florence.

Anxious to open this academy to all youthful artists of promise, Lorenzo had recently empowered Domenico Ghirlandajo to select from his pupils those whom he deemed most worthy of sharing this privilege; and he had fixed on the two friends, Michael Angelo and Granacci. Among the students already attached to the academy was one of great ability, Torrigiano. He was engaged in modelling terra-cotta figures within a circular border, under

the direction of Bertoldo, and Michael Angelo was so pleased with his performance that he attempted some figures in the same material, and modelled them with a spirit which attracted the favourable notice of Lorenzo. He soon after began to handle the chisel, and commenced his first work in marble by imitating a fine antique mask, the head of a Fawn, the mouth of which was almost effaced by the injuries of time. This feature he restored in his copy with great care and skill, imparting to it a comic smile, but withal a complete set of teeth. The attention of Lorenzo, in one of his walks in the garden, was caught by this mask, and he much commended the young artist whom he found at work upon it; but added in a good-humoured tone, "How is it that you have given your Fawn a complete set of teeth? Don't you know that such old fellows are sure to have lost some of them?" It seemed, says Condivi, a hundred years to the youth before Lorenzo took his leave, so anxious was he instantly to profit by what he felt to be a most just criticism. He lost no time in removing some of the teeth, and in forming the sockets which defined their places. His next anxiety was for the return of Lorenzo, who he hoped might deign again to notice his work, and to observe how carefully he had profited by his suggestion. In this hope he was not disappointed,—the wished for visit took place; Lorenzo again viewed the mask, and was so

LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

BORN 1448.—DIED 1402.

charmed with the boy's docility and talent, that he inquired his name and age, and amused himself with relating to his friends all that had passed. But the consequences ended not here: the incident made so deep an impression on Lorenzo's generous heart, ever on the watch for encouraging youthful merit, that he soon after sent for Lionardo, whom he no less astonished than delighted, by proposing to take his son under his special patronage, and to bestow some place of emolument on himself. The father wanted words to express in due terms his grateful assent, and doubtless left the great man's presence, with new and transmuted impressions of the dignity of Art, and with the soothing reflection that, after all, the blood of the ancient Counts of Canossa would not, as he had feared, be tainted by flowing through the veins of the youthful sculptor.

Among the MS. letters in the Casa Buonarroti is one from the Count of Canossa of that day, written at the time Michael Angelo was passing to and fro between Carrara and Rome, in the service of Julius II., claiming him with just pride as a relative, and entreating the gratification of a visit from him.

Lionardo was soon after gratified by a place in the Customs, and to his son was assigned, not only an apartment in the Medici Palace, but a seat also at the table of its illustrious head, among his own sons, and the distinguished literati who frequented it. His comfort was in every way con-

sidered, his course of studies was defined, and he was altogether treated more like a near relative than a mere dependant.

The mask which procured for him these high privileges, and had formed, as it were, a sort of turning point in his fortunes, naturally acquired a peculiar interest in his eye, and was presented by him to the Florentine Gallery, where it is still to be seen in perfect preservation, in the hall called Sala delle Inscrizioni.

Michael Angelo was at this time fifteen years old, and he continued to enjoy until the death of Lorenzo, a period of about three years, these signal advantages. He soon became a favourite in the family, and especially with his generous patron, who manifested an almost paternal interest in his welfare and improvement. In order to give him free access at all times to the Garden of Sculpture, he placed a key of it in his hands, and he frequently sent for him in private, when he freely conversed with him about his professional studies, and gave him salutary counsel with reference to the general culture and improvement of his mind. On such occasions he sometimes opened to him the rich cabinets containing his unrivalled collection of cameos, gems, intaglios, and other precious objects of art, pointing out the finest and rarest articles, and condescending to ask his opinion upon their respective merits.

CHAPTER III.

HE ESPECIALLY DEVOTES HIMSELF TO SCULPTURE. — STUDIES THE FRESCO PAINTINGS OF MASACCIO. — HIS QUARREL WITH TORRIGIANO, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

1490 TO 1491.

AFTER the admission of Michael Angelo into the Academy of San Marco, sculpture became his more peculiar study. The collection of bas-reliefs, statues, and fragments of Grecian art deposited there, imparted to him elevated ideas of dignity and grace in style and composition. Studying these models with a noble and emulous ambition, he gradually learnt to think the thoughts, and to catch the spirit, of the artists whose works he admired, yet without ceasing to be original. Judging from his first essay in relief under Bertoldo, and the spirited execution of the mask of the Fawn, he probably was not wholly a stranger to the art of modelling, when he entered the Academy.

Vasari states that in his ardour to excel he pursued his professional studies not only on ordinary working days, but also on holidays; and he adds that even the silent hours of the night often found him thus employed.

But sculpture did not wholly occupy his atten-

tion. The Gallery of San Marco was rich in cartoons and paintings from the pencils of the greatest of his Florentine predecessors, and the churches and palaces of the city abounded in fine pictures and frescoes of the early Italian School. Those of Masaccio in the Brancacci chapel in the church of San Pietro al Carmine, became his special study as models of invigorated and advanced art.

They had long been resorted to as such by a series of eminent painters, among whom may be enumerated Fra Angelico di Fiesole, the two Lippi's, Andrea Verrochio, Botticelli, Paolo Uccelli, Il Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, and at a later period D. Ghirlandajo, A. del Sarto, Pontormo, and Raphael di Urbino. Annibali Caro's epitaph on Masaccio expressly refers to the honour done to his memory by the homage of Michael Angelo: in particular,—

> "Pinsi e la mia pittura al ver fu pari;
> L' attegiai, l' avivai, le diedi il moto,
> Le diedi l' effetto. Insegni il Buonarroti
> A tutti gli altri, e da me solo impari."*

As Masaccio's works formed an epoch in art, and were thus carefully studied by Michael Angelo, they claim in these pages a brief but distinctive notice. They are chiefly to be seen in the Brancacci

* Literally,—

> "I painted, and my paintings were akin to Truth.
> I attained it, I animated it, I gave it action,
> I gave it effect. Buonarotti taught it
> To all mankind, but owed it originally to me."

chapel, side by side with those of his master Masolino di Panicale, whose example first taught him to conceive and execute his subjects on more correct principles of design than any of his predecessors. The names and the reputation of the master and pupil cannot be fairly separated, and they may justly be regarded as the joint founders of what has often been called the second school of modern painting, occupying a middle position between its formation under Cimabue and Giotto, and its perfection under Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Raphael.

The history of St. Peter, partly derived from the genuine text of Scripture, and partly from legendary sources, forms the principal subject of the paintings in this chapel. They occupy numerous compartments, some covering a very large extent of wall, others upright panels on a smaller scale.

To distinguish precisely in every instance between the works of the master and the scholar is difficult, but two of the largest compartments are generally assigned to Masolino. They are both compound subjects, viz., 1st, the Vocation of St. Peter and the Tribute-Money; 2nd, the Cure of the Lame Man by Peter and John at the beautiful gate of the temple, and the Martyrdom of Santa Petronilla. Vasari tells us he had often and deeply studied these works of Masolino, and that their distinctive excellences are breadth of manner, harmonious colouring, and correct and vigorous draw-

wing,—qualities in which they much surpass the school of Giotto.

Time has exercised its deleterious influence on these paintings, and their original vigour has in parts been much impaired by repainting, but the figures are in general simple and dignified, and the heads are replete with expression. The rounding and relief are also good. Masolino derived this excellence in art from the study of modelling under the great sculptor in bronze Ghiberti. In what year he commenced his labours in the chapel is uncertain, but he died in the year 1415, at the early age of thirty-seven. The further progress of the works was for a time suspended, but at length Masaccio, his former pupil, was invited to complete them. He was born in the year 1402, and died at the age of forty-three, not without suspicion of poison.

Masaccio, like his master, had studied modelling under Ghiberti; from Brunelleschi he had derived a correct knowledge of the science of perspective, in which the earlier Italian school had been miserably deficient; he had also studied sculpture during a residence in Rome, in the course of which he painted some fine frescoes in the church of San Clemente, illustrative of the legendary history of St. Catherine. In spite of the feeble manner in which they have been retouched, or rather repainted, in modern times, these frescoes still attest the charm and power of his pencil. He also painted a chapel in the church of S. Maria Maggiore, which Vasari

refers to as follows:—"Michael Angelo and I once visited this chapel together: he praised it much, and said 'In the time of Masaccio these figures must have absolutely seemed alive.'" *

Thus highly endowed by nature and disciplined by education, Masaccio carried the art of painting to a still greater perfection than his master,—he surpassed him in purity of outline, in vigorous and correct drawing, and in strength of expression. His draperies are flowing and easy, and gracefully accordant with the various positions of the limbs. The air and expression of his heads often remind us, as Mengs observes, of Raphael; and his colouring, though much injured by time, so far survives as to indicate its original clearness and brilliancy. The subject of the finest of his works in the Brancacci chapel is the Resuscitation of a Boy by St. Peter, a large composition, well disposed and grouped, and in which the figures appear to be all in action and movement. The earnest, beseeching expression and attitude of the youth, the dignified character of the apostle, and the appropriate grouping of the other principal figures, impart a peculiar interest to this work.

The expulsion of our first parents from Paradise is another of the painter's fine works, in which the drawing and expression are able, and so forcible, that Raphael afterwards introduced an almost

* Vasari, Vita di Masaccio, vol. v. p. 182.

literal copy of it into one of the compartments in the Loggie of the Vatican. Another celebrated composition of this series represents a youth preparing for baptism. It is so fine in the drawing, that tradition points back to its first appearance as to an epoch in Florentine art. It is now in a great degree effaced by the ravages of time.

After Masaccio's premature death in 1443, his disciple, Filippo Lippi, was employed to fill up some of the smaller compartments according to his designs, and to finish parts of the larger compositions. His style is graceful, and his colouring harmonious, so that he ably discharged this office, and, as he was a fine landscape painter, he in this way heightened the beauty of the backgrounds.

But though Masaccio thus gave an important impulse to painting in the right direction, though his works became lessons to future students, in perspective and foreshortening, in drawing and execution, and though the expression of his heads and attitudes was such as to draw forth the observation that his predecessors painted figures, but that he imparted life to his, yet he never, we conceive, equalled Giotto and his greatest scholars, in some of the noblest qualities of art.

If, for instance, his works in the Brancacci Chapel, to which we have been adverting, be compared with those of Giotto in the Chapel of Madonna dell' Arena, at Padua, erected A. D. 1303,

it will be found that Giotto, although his type of beauty is often faulty, bears away the palm in the highest qualities of creative art. The Paduan Chapel represents, in a series of compartments disposed along two side walls, the life of Christ, and that of the Virgin; the arched vault of the ceiling is painted in azure, studded with stars in gold, among which are the heads of Christ and various saints. Above the arch of the choir is the Saviour surrounded by a glory of Angels, while the wall above the entrance is devoted to the Last Judgment. Along the lower range of the side walls are a series of medallions painted in chiaro-'scuro, filled with allegorical figures of the Virtues and Vices. Within the sphere of the scriptural subjects, the spirit of all that is most dignified, graceful, and impressive in sacred historical painting, animated the pencil of Giotto. In the compartment of the Ascension, the figure of the Saviour mounting heavenwards, is scarcely surpassed in sublimity of conception by the finest productions of Raphael. The Christ before Pilate, is a fine composition, in which the meek yet dignified submission of the principal figure comes into striking contrast with the ferocity of the bystanders. The Entombment in this series has never been surpassed in solemn sweetness, nature, and tenderness. It is in the style and spirit of a similar subject by Giotto in the Church of Santa Croce, at Florence, the pathos of which, it is said, frequently led Michael Angelo

to visit and admire it. We abstain from going into further details, but it may well be said of the whole of these compartments, that they are fraught with the highest beauties of art. The greater part of the works of Giotto have perished; but judging of him from the paintings of this chapel, and from those at Assisi, he soars far beyond the sphere of Masaccio in poetical conception, in devout elevation, in refined grace and tenderness. Masaccio is the head of the modern realistic School in its most dignified form; Giotto is the head of that great School which combines the truth and simplicity of nature, with the lofty and charming qualities of the ideal and poetic. Giotto's incorrect drawing, his ignorance of perspective and foreshortening, the feebleness of his extremities, and his other obvious defects, were consequences of imperfect and undeveloped art; his beauties are those of a genius of the highest order.

The great qualities of Giotto are, in no small degree, reflected in the works of the ablest of his followers,—Taddeo Gaddi, Giottino, and Andrea Orcagna, who has been called, not without reason, the Michael Angelo of the fourteenth century. Like him, Orcagna was great as a painter, a sculptor, and an architect; he also excelled in poetical composition. In the Campo Santo at Pisa, his powers as a painter are finely displayed, and his Heaven, Hell, and Last Judgment in the Strozzi Chapel of the Church of S. Marco at Flo-

rence, was the School of Art to Fra Angelico di Fiesole, the inimitable delineator of saintly visions and devout conceptions, borrowed both from sacred and legendary lore; of whom Michael Angelo beautifully remarked, that he must have studied in heaven the faces which he depicted on earth.

It is true that Giotto was not absolutely the creator of that new School of which he was the brightest ornament. We have elsewhere touched upon the degree in which he shared this glory with others,—but if their influence was thus preparative, his was decisive and transcendant. It pervaded Tuscany, it was felt at Siena, it extended throughout Northern Italy and far beyond its precincts: the number of his pupils was prodigious; his independent spirit everywhere prompted improvement and invention, but his innovations were so controlled by a sound judgment that, while he gave new wings to art, he seldom lost sight of a due reverence for the conventional types of the early Church.*

It might have been expected that his chapel at Padua would have acted influentially not only on

* All that is here said of Giotto is consistent with the admission that the school of Siena was antecedent to that of Florence; that Duccio shared with Cimabue and Giotto in imparting new life to art in the fourteenth century; and that all three were more or less indebted (as we have elsewhere shown) to the example of Nicola Pisano for their emancipation from the trammels of Byzantine stiffness and barbarism.

the schools of Northern Italy, but in particular on that of Venice. The works of D'Avanzo Veronese and his coadjutor Aldighiero da Zevia (A. D. 1376), as seen in the chapels of S. Felice and S. Georgio, attached to the Church of S. Antonio at Padua, prove how deeply this influence was felt there. It is to be regretted that the subjects are chiefly legendary; but the spirit which they breathe is that of Giotto in a plenitude scarcely surpassed by any of his followers, except it be Orcagna. Had the Venetian painters caught the same inspiration we might possibly have beheld in the union of their magical colour with the ideal grandeûr of the great School, the reversal of that saying,

"Nor was perfection meant for man below."

Michael Angelo's life, since his adoption into the family of Lorenzo, had flowed along in a current of uninterrupted prosperity and happiness; but he was to have his crosses like other people, and a quarrel with one of his fellow-pupils about this time, though trifling in its origin, was the means of inflicting upon him a permanent personal injury. Passing mention has already been made of Torrigiano as one of his fellow-pupils in the garden of S. Marco, who had already given proof of superior talent; Vasari describes him as the torment of the other scholars, from his pride and jealousy. He could not, he says, bear to see himself eclipsed, and, because he felt that he was so by the youthful Buon-

arroti, he regarded him with hatred and envy, and took frequent occasions to insult him. One day this conduct led to a personal affray between them, when an unlucky blow from the fist of Torrigiano, who was a man of great strength, falling upon the nose of his rival, broke the bridge, and marred its symmetry for life.*

Vasari states that the quarrel took place in the garden of San Marco, but Torrigiano, who gave his own version of the affair to Benvenuto Cellini many years after, said that it occurred in the Brancacci chapel, and added that he well remembered the sort of whiz or crack which marked the moment of the unfortunate fracture.

"I could not bear," adds Cellini, "to hear this fellow boasting of his having inflicted such an injury on the divine Michael Angelo, (an epithet very commonly applied to him by his contemporaries,) so that from that moment I cut his acquaintance." Torrigiano added, that some sarcasm of Michael Angelo's, who he said was much given to ridicule, had provoked the encounter. Such are the two existing versions of this outrage, which, in its consequences, has handed down the bust of Michael Angelo to posterity, despoiled in its prominent feature of whatever symmetry nature had originally assigned it. We can scarcely imagine a more mortifying trial to a young man pressing forward

* Vasari, p. 11. Cellini, Vita, tom. i. p. 29. Firenze, 1832.

to distinction. That Lorenzo de' Medici conceived Torrigiano to have been the prime and principal offender must be inferred from the fact that he felt it needful instantly to fly from Florence, in order to escape a severer punishment. *

The fugitive took refuge in Rome, where he was employed by Alexander VI. in executing various ornamental works in stucco. His love of adventure next led him to become a soldier of fortune, and he served as a private in the wars of Romagna, under the Duke of Valentino, whence passing into the service of Piero de' Medici, he won an ensigncy by his gallantry in a skirmish at the ford of the Garigliano. Several years later we hear of him as in England patronised and employed by Henry VIII. The bronze medallions which decorate the shrine of Henry VII. in Westminster Abbey, fraught with the plastic beauty and grace of the palmy days of Italian art, are believed, on the best grounds, to have been executed by him. Though liberal prices, it is said, were paid him for his works in England, his dissipated habits kept him continually poor.

His next migration was to Spain, where he quickly obtained notice and profitable employment. Vasari gives a list of his works in that country, and speaks of them as having excited high admiration, but finishes with the following brief though

* A fine specimen of Torrigiano's art is to be seen in the Sydenham Crystal Palace, in one of the chambers of the Renaissance. It is the statue of a St. Jerom.

tragical account of the close of his eventful career: —

"A Spanish nobleman, the Duke d'Arcos, had seen and admired one of his statues, which he was induced by promises of high remuneration to copy for him. The statue was finished and the price claimed, when an attempt was made by the duke to force on him a vast heap of copper money, which fell very short in value of the stipulated payment. Incensed at this treatment, and probably goaded on by insults in addition to the fraud, he darted on the statue, and fractured it to atoms in the duke's presence. His oppressor now had him cast into prison, on a charge of heresy, for which he might possibly have furnished some slight plea, by indulging too great a freedom of tongue in a land of despotism. Be this as it may, the terrors of the Inquisition so preyed upon his fancy, that he gradually sunk into a deep and settled dejection, from which nothing could rouse him; and he ended an existence, rendered wretched through his follies, by voluntary starvation."

CHAPTER IV.

IMPROVING INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIETY WHICH FREQUENTED THE PALACE OF LORENZO UPON THE YOUTHFUL BUONARROTI. — SKETCHES OF POLITIAN, LANDINI, PICO DI MIRANDULA, B. SCALA, AND HIS LEARNED DAUGHTER ALESSANDRA, THE PULCI FAMILY, MATTEO FRANCO, G. BENIVIENI, DEMETRIUS CHALCONDYLES, T. LINACRE, MARSIGLIO FICINO.

1490 TO 1492.

WHILST thus domesticated in the Medici Palace, Michael Angelo divided his time between artistic studies and the acquirement of scientific and literary knowledge. Of the mode in which he pursued mental improvement, and under what masters, we are not told; but the facility and skill with which, at early periods of his life, he applied the principles of mechanical science to the construction of machinery, and to other practical purposes, renders it probable that, at the time of which we are writing, he must have acquired considerable mathematical knowledge. Throughout his subsequent career, we find him, on all needful occasions, prompt to apply, with equal readiness and ability, these principles to the details of architecture, machinery, and fortification.

Neither does it appear by what means he acquired the classical knowledge which may be traced in many of his designs. Under the auspices of Lorenzo, and beneath the same roof with Politian this important branch of artistic knowledge could not be neglected; but we have no evidence that he ever became a proficient in the learned languages; and the probability is, that the assiduous study of ancient sculpture, and the aid of contemporary scholars, rendered him, as they also did Raphael, sufficiently conversant with the mythology of Greece and Rome for all practical purposes. It was far otherwise as respects the native Tuscan Muse, with the finest productions of which he was familiar even in early youth. Music shared his preference with poetry, and they jointly formed the charm and recreation of his leisure. The taste for both, as Ginguené, the elegant historian of Italian literature *, has remarked respecting him, was daily fostered beneath his patron's roof. In fact, it was impossible for any one who had a spark of literary enthusiasm, to be associated with the society which constantly assembled in the palace of Lorenzo, without delighting in, and being stirred up to mental activity and research. Not only the most eminent men of Florence tasted the pleasures of literary and friendly intercourse in the Medici Palace, but strangers of distinction from the various states of

* Ginguené, Hist. de la Let. Ital., cap. 20.

Italy, and from the principal countries of Europe, were sure of a kind and friendly welcome.

Here, in the double capacity of Lorenzo's friend and the tutor of his children, was daily to be seen, with his protruding beaked nose and full eye, Politian, one of the most elegant and profound scholars of the age, and a poet eminent for the vigour of his style and the richness of his fancy, whether in Latin or Italian composition. The most abstruse points of the scholastic philosophy, the most difficult questions of history and criticism, the most recondite as well as the most elegant topics of general learning, had been sounded by his inquisitive intellect. He was as much at home in elucidating the leading differences between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, or in commenting upon the Pandects of Justinian, as he was in adjusting minute points of verbal criticism, or in pointing a Greek epigram, or in giving scope to a vein of playful humour. His industry was equal to his genius. He was indefatigable in pursuing the tedious labour of collating and comparing Greek and Latin MSS.; and subsequent scholars have been deeply indebted to his acumen in correcting the errors of transcribers, and restoring genuine readings. His epistolary powers were of a high order, and the collection of his Letters, and those of his most distinguished correspondents, in twelve books, is still adverted to with great interest, in consequence of their innate vigour, and of the light

POLITIAN.

BORN 1454 — DIED 1494

which they cast on the literary and social history of the time. Both he and his friends are profuse of mutual flattery; but, in spite of this drawback, they write like men full of generous ardour for the promotion of learning, and prompt to incur the utmost labour of body and mind to further its interests.

Many among them emulated the literary zeal of Politian. The services which they rendered to classical literature demand the grateful thanks of scholars of all countries and ages, even though the present actual value of their researches is in a great degree superseded by the advanced criticism of modern times.

The name of Politian is not less honourably associated than that of his illustrious patron with the revived glories of native Italian poetry. In the year 1468, Luca Pulci had celebrated the prowess of Lorenzo de' Medici at a tilting match, in verses of much spirit; and Politian subsequently took occasion, out of a similar pageant of a day, to weave a poem of immortal memory. It is entitled "La Giostra di Giuliano de' Medici," and is so replete with rich, creative fancy, brilliant description, and nervous elegance of diction, that even an Ariosto and a Tasso became its admirers and imitators, as is proved by various passages in their respective poems.* It is pretended that Politian

* Maffei, in his history entitled Storia della Letteratura Italiana, cap. 3., cites several of these imitative passages.

was only fourteen years of age when he wrote this poem; but Ginguené*, whose critical authority stands justly high, rejects the statement as incredible, and maintains that though the Tournay which gave occasion to it took place soon after the former, Politian's poem was not written till he was about eighteen or twenty years of age. This was probably the case; but whatever its date, it made the fortune of its author, by securing to him the admiration and patronage of the Medici, who thenceforth treated him as a client and a friend. It is to be regretted that this beautiful poem is in an unfinished state.

Such was the celebrity of Politian for epigrammatic point and wit, that it subjected him to incessant applications for inscriptions of all kinds, and from all sorts of people. Scholars and ecclesiastics, ladies and lovers, beaux and virtuosos, directors of festive banquets, and all who wished to add a charm to little gifts and presents, came to him; some for mottoes to the hilt of a sword, or to the circle of a ring; others for billets-doux, or pasquinades for the carnival, or for inscriptions suited to china or plate, or for enigmas such as a lover or a mistress should be able to interpret but nobody else; in short, to use his own words, "I am daily forced to put up with this sort of persecution, and am actually dragged about *like an ox by his nose.*" †

* Ginguené, Hist. de la Let. Ital., vol. iv. p. 157.

† "Sed tamen et occupatiunculæ, vel trichæ potius ineptæ quædam molestæ nimis otium omne meum pene inter sese

Paulus Jovius has written bitter things respecting the morals of Politian, and Bayle has repeated them with entire credence. They are of a nature not to be retailed; but as Jovius is a writer of little credit, and supports his charges by nothing like evidence, we trust they may be deemed calumnious. It can scarcely be imagined that the friend of Lorenzo de' Medici, and of Pico di Mirandula, was a foul hypocrite.

It is true that, in his Latin poems, there are descriptive passages to be found of a grossly licentious character. Well would it have been for his fair fame had they never seen the light, or had he afterwards denounced them himself, as fruits of youthful indiscretion. That he should have ventured at any time to print them, furnishes a strong

scripulatim partiuntur. Nam si quis breve dictum, quod in gladii capulo, vel in annuli legatur emblemate, si quis versum lecto aut cubiculo; si quis insigne aliquod non argento discere, sed fictilibus omnino suis desiderat, illico ad Politianum cursitat, omnesque jam parietes à me quasi à limace videas oblitos argumentis variis et titulis." The description goes on in the same strain, embracing many other particulars, thus: "Ille mihi proprios amores stultus stultiori narrat, ille symbolum poscit, quod suæ tantum pateat, cæterorum frustra conjecturas exerceat," &c. &c.—*Politiani Opera*, Basil. folio, A. D. 1553, p. 26.

In examining the printed works of Politian, and his merits as a scholar, I have been much indebted to a volume published at Manchester, A. D. 1805, by the Rev. W. Parr Greswell. It contains memoirs of Politian, Pico di Mirandula, and some other eminent Italians, and forms a truly learned and elegant miscellany.

comment on the moral bluntness of the age, with respect to such lamentable aberrations of genius.

It is interesting to know that Politian shared with Lorenzo de' Medici in fostering the genius of Michael Angelo. A bas-relief is to be seen in the gallery of the Casa Buonarroti undertaken by him (Vasari informs us) at the suggestion of Politian. He calls it the battle of the Centaurs and Lapithæ. Among fifteen or twenty figures a Centaur is to be seen prostrate in death; the other figures consist of young men in various attitudes hurling missiles. Michael Angelo at this time must have been about seventeen years of age. As a youthful production it is full of talent and originality. On surveying it in after years, in company with Vasari, he was struck by the spirit of the execution, and remarked that he should perhaps have done well had he allowed nothing to divert him from an exclusive devotion to sculpture.*

In this society, also, Cristoforo Landini, towards the close of his long life, delighted to relax from severer studies, and to receive the marks of respect and deference which were readily conceded to the veteran classical scholar and accomplished commentator on Dante. His Platonic tastes and varied acquirements had early secured to him the patronage of Cosmo de' Medici. The learned world had

* Thorwaldsen, the eminent Danish sculptor, so much admired this bas-relief as to say that it was in itself a practical lecture upon art.

profited by his critical labours on the text of various Greek and Latin authors; and general readers had received with approbation his Dialogues on the different spheres of Taste and Enjoyment attached to the active and contemplative Life, of which Dante has so strikingly suggested the distinctive attributes.

And if the youthful artist sought amidst this literary assemblage for some striking example of profound learning in union with the high bearing and ease of a perfect gentleman, he had it almost daily before him in the person of Giovanni Pico, prince of Mirandula, between whom and Lorenzo kindred studies and congenial tastes had lighted up a flame of intimate friendship. The privileges of princely rank, the fascinations of wealth and pleasure, were lightly esteemed by Pico in comparison with the peaceful and intellectual delights of philosophy and learning. He was born in the year 1463. To great classical erudition, and to a profound acquaintance with the scholastic philosophy, he united the knowledge of the Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Arabic languages, and had made himself master of the mathematical and physical sciences in such degrees as they were then cultivated. He had attended the lectures of the most eminent professors in the principal cities of Italy and France, and had often engaged in public discussions with them upon the most intricate and difficult questions. He wrote poetry with great fluency both in Latin and Italian; but theo-

logy and philosophy principally engaged his attention. Wherever he went his fame preceded him as a literary prodigy; but the most remarkable page in his brief but eventful history was connected with his visit to Rome in the year 1486. He was then only twenty-three years of age, and astonished the learned world by putting forth nine hundred propositions upon innumerable points connected with dialectics, physics, mathematics, metaphysics, theology, and morals, accompanied by a challenge to discuss them publicly with all opponents from every part of Europe; and by even offering to pay the reasonable expenses of any learned men who might be deputed from foreign universities to enter the lists against him. None were found to take up the gauntlet thus proudly cast down; but the consequences of this piece of youthful effrontery differed widely from those which, in his thirst for fame, Pico had anticipated. Instead of unparalleled renown, he found himself assailed by the shafts of calumny and envy. Thirteen of his propositions were denounced to the court of Rome as tending to heresy. In vain did he adduce proofs that they had been already approved by the erudite professors of many celebrated colleges, and that his own opinions were strictly orthodox. The charges were advanced under the sanction of such grave authority, that Innocent VIII. deemed it needful to submit them to the consideration of a commission of divines; and years elapsed before he received an acquittal from

allegations for which there was no real foundation. His further residence in Rome being rendered painful and unpleasant, and even as he thought perilous, by this state of things, he took refuge in Florence, where he was welcomed with open arms by Lorenzo de' Medici, who rejoiced in such an accession to his circle of friends. Here he published an apology or defence of his propositions, full of acuteness and learning, but which proved how subtle and frivolous were a great part of the questions which he had so ostentatiously raised.* The Platonical tastes of Pico peculiarly adapted him to the society of Florence; and he was soon united by bonds of close intimacy, not only with Lorenzo, but, through him, with Politian, Ficino, and Landini. To attach him the more closely to their circle and to Florence, Lorenzo presented him with a villa on the delightful slope of Fiesole, a favourite retreat with himself, and where Politian also had a pleasant summer residence. The orange, the olive, and the vine mingle their sweets and blend their varied greens throughout the gardens which adorn the sides of this classical mountain; and far beneath the range of its deep undulating forests and rocky acclivities, the domes and towers of Florence sparkle in the beams of a southern sun; while beyond them is spread out a vast

* Those who may wish to amuse themselves with examining his propositions would do well to consult the folio edition of his works published at Basle, and entitled Opera Joannis Pici, Mirandulo Comes, ex officinâ Henriepatrina, vol. i. pp. 114—117. &c. and 382.

and varied landscape of exquisite fertility and beauty, watered by the Arno. In such society, and amidst these enchanting scenes, Pico not only ardently pursued his learned studies, but forgot his recent disappointments; or rather he learned to extract from them lessons of Christian philosophy and wisdom. Religion, henceforth, supremely occupied his affections. He frankly pleaded guilty to having brought his trials upon himself by an excess of presumptuous vanity, and often said that nothing could have been more salutary than the check which that vanity had received through the good providence of God, which had made use of the malice of his enemies for this special purpose. Thus disciplined in the school of adversity, much of the remainder of his brief course on earth was spent in the hallowed shades of Christian and literary retirement. The tendency of his Latin and Italian poems having been chiefly amatory, he now committed them with an unsparing hand to the flames, an act which Politian, much more a man of the world than himself, deemed a great literary transgression, but which, after what has been said of the licentious tendency of some of his own poems, he might have done well to imitate.

The Holy Scriptures now became the object of his assiduous study, and, aided by their pure and unerring light, he disentangled himself more and more from those philosophic figments which had clouded his own spiritual views and those of his Platonic associates.

Pico was a great friend of the monk Savonarola, and, like him, he anxiously desired a reform of the corruptions of the Romish Church: he also exposed, with equal force and learning, the follies and the frauds of judicial astrology. His latter days appear to have been spent under a presentiment of approaching death; for his great anxiety was to shake off, as much as possible, every earthly incumbrance, and to prepare for his upward flight. Retaining only a sufficient income for his independent maintenance, he made great largesses to the poor, and resigned the bulk of his fortune and the lordship of Mirandula to his nephew Giovanni Francesco, the inheritor, not only of his title and name, but also of his love of letters and his religious tastes.*

* In the collection of his published epistles one occurs addressed to his nephew, in the year 1492, which proves how ardent was his love of learning to the last: —

"The cause of my not answering your letter has been, that some Hebrew books fell into my hands, by which I have been perpetually occupied for seven days and nights, so that they have almost put out my eyes. The fact is that a Jew, one Siculus, who brought them here, is to depart in twenty days, so that I am sure you would not have wished me to turn away from them to write a letter; indeed, I cannot spare a moment from them, lest they should quit me before I have mastered their contents. When I have once effected this, I will deluge you with letters, although you well know how full I ever am of employment.

"Farewell! Fear God, and daily live in the contemplation of death.

"Ferrara, May 30th, 1492."

Opera Jovan. Pic. Miran., 2 vols. folio, Basil, vol. i. p. 361.

This great man, often denominated by his contemporaries the Phœnix of his age, was cut off by death in the thirty-third year of his age, A. D. 1494.

In these days the studious pursuits of the scholar and philosopher (as in the case of the Grecian sophists in the age of Socrates) were not unfrequently blended with the functions of the politician and the statesman; and foreign embassies were entrusted to learned men, who, in the intervals of leisure from their official duties, were actively engaged in collecting and collating MSS., or in delivering public lectures on classical literature, or the belles lettres. Such were Emanuel Chrysoloras and Poggio Bracciolini in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and Florence at this time witnessed a somewhat similar union of functions in her chancellor Bartolomeo di Scala. The son of a poor miller, his youthful talents had attracted the favourable notice of Cosmo de' Medici, and to his liberality he owed the advantage of a learned education. He afterwards studied the law, and made a figure at the bar. Fortune smiled upon his professional career, for he gradually accumulated considerable wealth, was honoured with letters patent of nobility, and filled some of the highest dignities of the Republic. To these envied distinctions he was ambitious of adding the reputation of scholarship, and in particular the praise of writing Latin with Ciceronian elegance: but his vanity unfortunately brought him into conflict with

Politian, whose style he had ventured to criticise, and whom he even had the impertinence to denominate "ferruminatorem," in ridicule of his use of unusual and obsolete Latin words, and of his occasional singularities of spelling. These censures, it is true, were blended with the most deferential compliments to that great scholar, and with unbounded commendations of his learning and genius. Politian at first defended himself in a calm and courteous manner, and even admitted that Scala was not without some claim to the praise of learning; but a false quantity in an epigram which he had sent to Politian gave him an occasion of venting his lurking spleen upon its author, whom he attacked in a style of ridicule and sarcasm which stung him to the quick. He now attempted a retreat, and even tried to propitiate Politian's wrath by sedatives and compliments; but these he treated with contempt, and retorted upon Scala with such bitter taunts that the quarrel became altogether personal. Politian, on this occasion, sacrificed to unworthy resentment the moderation which became a philosopher and a gentleman. Their meetings in public after this quarrel were mutually unpleasant. If Politian assumed at such times the disdainful air of the great scholar and critic, Scala in return looked down upon him with the lofty bearing of chancellor and gonfaloniere of Florence, cup-bearer to the Pope, and a knight of the golden spur: honours which were

bestowed upon him when he delivered, as Florentine ambassador, a complimentary oration to Innocent VIII. upon his accession to the papal throne,—the flattery and elegant Latinity of which had charmed the pontiff's ear.*

Attached to Scala's side, on such occasions as admitted of the presence of the fair sex, was a young lady in flower of youth and beauty's pride, his admired, accomplished, and learned daughter Alessandra. If to find Lady Jane Grey reading and relishing the sublime speculations of Plato in preference to the ordinary amusements of her sex, charmed and astonished Roger Ascham somewhat less than a century later, what would he have said of Alessandra di Scala, had he been her contemporary. She was not only deeply read in the Greek and Latin classics, but wrote fluently in Latin, and replied to a Greek epigram addressed to her by Politian (who was her devoted admirer) in the same language.† Hapless Politian, neither the productions of his classical nor Tuscan muse, nor his high admiration, nor his flattering assiduities could win for him, in return to his studied adulation, anything beyond the respectful homage due

* Those who would like to examine the correspondence of these literary pugilists will find it in the works of Politian, in the Basil edition already referred to, p. 170. &c.

† Politian refers, in one of his letters, to a representation of the Electra of Sophocles at Florence, at which Alessandra performed the part of Electra with much talent.

to his acknowledged erudition. It has been conjectured that Alessandra's indifference sharpened Politian's feelings of resentment towards her father. She afterwards married a Greek, Michael Marulli.

Recitations of poetry, somewhat in the style of the ancient Rhapsodists, are said to have occasionally added zest to the other attractions of the Medici banquets; and special mention is made by Bernardo Tasso of Luigi Pulci, as imparting this species of amusement to the assembled guests. There were three poetical brothers of the ancient and noble family of Pulci, all of them men of literary taste and zeal, and in high favour with Lorenzo. Bernard, the eldest, was a pastoral poet; Luca was the author of heroic epistles in imitation of Ovid, and had attained notice and applause, as has been already stated, as the author of the "Giostra" of Lorenzo de' Medici; but Luigi, the youngest of the three, soared far above his brothers in poetical power, and was specially dear to Lorenzo, who found in him a personal friend, and an able coadjutor in his various measures for the advancement of literature. In his poem, "La Caccia col Falcone," he thus addresses him:—

"Luigi Pulci ov' è, che non si sente?
Egli se n' andò dianzi in quel boschetto,
Che qualche fantasia ha per la mente;
Verrà fantasticar forse un sonnetto."

Luigi's recitations at Lorenzo's table, from his celebrated poem the "Morgante Maggiore," are

also mentioned by Crescembeni, who falls into the strange anachronism noticed by Roscoe and others, of fixing their date so far back as 1450, two years, in fact, before the birth of Lorenzo, and thirty-five before the publication of the "Morgante," which came out in 1485. This poem is cited by Italian critics as the first example of the half-burlesque half-serious Epopee, a second example of which is to be found in the "Rolando" of Count Boiardo, a poet contemporary with Pulci. This style of mingled romance and comedy, the precursor of the dignified epic of Tasso, was wrought to its highest perfection by the rich and glowing fancy of Ariosto.

The hero of the "Morgante" is a giant chosen from among the fabulous Paladins of the court of Charlemagne. At first a fierce and savage pagan, and bitterly opposed to the Christian faith, he is converted by the spear rather than by the arguments of Orlando; after which they go forth together to fight the battles of the faith; and the poem is made up of their strange adventures and wild exploits.

"Some have placed this poem," observes Tiraboschi, "among serious, others among burlesque poems; some have treated it with contempt, others have preferred it to the 'Orlando.' No man of good sense," he adds, "can fail to see in the 'Morgante' a burlesque poem, in which there is much of fancy and poetical invention, conveyed in that

species of idiomatic and racy sportiveness which is best adapted to give expression to the numerous Tuscan jokes and proverbs with which it abounds. The want, however, of connection and order in the narratives, and the frequent vulgarity and ruggedness of the diction, render the reading of it scarcely tolerable. It also highly offends by the great abuse of turning the most sacred things into ridicule. Even well known texts of Holy Scripture are treated in this way,—a vice common among the burlesque poets."

Tiraboschi's censure is somewhat too indiscriminate. There is an ease and playfulness in the style of the "Morgante" which impart a certain *naïveté* to the succession of its romantic and marvellous adventures. Sacred and profane allusions are, it is too true, intermingled with most unpardonable levity; yet in many instances the religious episodes and sentiments are expressed with a dignity and force which argue a taste for better things. Pulci, moreover, amused Lorenzo and his guests in other ways than by simple recitations. He was the author of innumerable sonnets, many of them the vehicle of keen satire, and of the most biting personal ridicule.

Matteo Franco shared with him in the same talent; and when they met at the table of their patron, they often attacked each other with reckless wit, invective, and sarcasm, content to sacrifice their own self-respect if only they could provoke laughter and merriment by their mutual sallies.

In spite of these personalities and seeming bitterness, we are assured they were all the time the best friends possible.

Facts like these may serve to qualify our, perhaps, too poetic notions of the table-talk of Florence in the fifteenth century. Such personalities and retorts are obviously irreconcilable with good manners or gentlemanly feeling. Yet we hear nothing of the interference of Lorenzo or his guests on such occasions.* We shall hereafter have to notice the striking contrasts which Italian society then presented, of learned and low tastes, of lofty speculation and profligate practice.† When Sismondi speaks of the half-pagan banquets of Lorenzo, his thoughts probably glanced at these scenes and occurrences.

All, however, were not such. We have already touched on the elevated tastes which the cultivation of the Platonic philosophy imparted to some of its votaries. Among these, Girolamo Benivieni, the youngest of three learned brothers, deserves to be specially named as a poet who not only aided Politian and Lorenzo in sustaining the glory of the native Tuscan muse, but who is also entitled to esteem for the fine sentiments and graceful imagery

* Cosmo himself, amidst his habitual gravity of character, was extremely fond of being amused by low buffoonery.

† Politian describes the wit and fun of M. Franco as being an adjunct to much practical adroitness and sagacity. Opera Politiani, p. 144.

with which he illustrates the unfading glories of religion, and the elevating influences of Divine Love. In his case, Platonism is made the handmaid to Christianity; whereas the reverse was true of most of the devotees of this school. So intimate a friendship subsisted between Benivieni and Pico de Mirandula, that when the death of the former occurred at the advanced age of ninety, his remains were deposited, at his own particular desire, in the tomb of his illustrious friend, in the church of S. Marco at Florence.

A brief passing notice is also due to another friend of Lorenzo, Demetrius Chalcondyles. He was among the refugee Greeks who migrated to the West either a few years before, or immediately after, the fall of Constantinople. A native of Athens, and critically master of the Greek language, he united great powers of application to a sound judgment, and was therefore well qualified to fill the chair of Greek Professor at Florence, to which he was appointed by Lorenzo in 1479. Though not endued with the lofty enthusiasm of Emanuel Chrysoloras, his principal precursor in the promotion of Greek learning in that city, he was a profound philologist, and under him were trained up not only many able Italian but also foreign scholars, some of whom afterwards introduced into other countries of Europe the love and the culture of Greek letters. Paulus Jovius maintains that Chalcondyles and Politian were rivals for popularity,

and that the humour and eloquence of the latter thinned the benches of the learned Athenian. It has also been asserted that Politian superseded him in his professorship; but Roscoe has ably refuted this story, and has shown, by extracts from Politian's letters, that their friendship continued unabated, and that Chalcondyles did not quit Florence for Milan, his final residence, till after the death of Lorenzo. He had the honour of being editor of the Editio princeps of Homer, which was published in two volumes folio, at Florence, A. D. 1488, as also of editions of Isocrates and Suidas. He was a man of grave and retired habits, and of strictly honourable character.

The same kindness of heart, and discernment of character, which induced Lorenzo to patronise the youthful Buonarroti, had not long before procured marks of his favour for Thomas Linacre, a young Englishman who subsequently acquired great celebrity as an elegant scholar and an able physician. He came to Italy in the suite of William de Selling, ambassador to the court of Rome, from Henry VII. Selling, while at Florence, had introduced him to Politian, under whom and Demetrius Chalcondyles he realised the great object of his visit to Italy, a critical knowledge of the Greek language. The charm of his character and manners so won upon Lorenzo, that he associated him with his own children in their learned studies, and in their attendance at the classes of the most eminent pro-

fessors. Two other young Englishmen, Grocyn and Collet, who, like Linacre, became afterwards principal promoters of Greek learning in their own country, were also pursuing at this time a similar course of study at Florence.*

The torch of Greek learning, which, to the honour of England, has so long emitted a pure and stedfast light on the banks of the Isis and the Cam, was thus derived to her from those of the Arno, beneath the auspices of Lorenzo de' Medici and Politian. Such, however, is the power of bigotry and prejudice, that great opposition was made to the first attempts of English scholars to introduce Greek letters into our two universities. The facetious pen of Sir Thomas More denominated the two parties at Oxford for and against the new study, as Greeks and Trojans, and so bitter was their mutual animosity that they actually came to blows, the watchword of the opposing faction being, "Cave a Græcis ne Hereticus fias." When Erasmus visited Oxford, this prejudice was on the decline; but it continued so strong at Cambridge, that he lectured on Chrysostom to empty benches; and severe penalties were even denounced against any one who should be detected as having a Greek Testament in his possession.

Marsiglio Ficino, whose name is indelibly associated with the Platonic Academy of Florence, of

* Tiraboschi, vol. vi. part ii. p. 382. edit. Roma, 4to., 1784.

which he was the Head, ranks also among the friends who ever found a welcome in the palace of Lorenzo; and his visits were the more prized from the rarity of his appearance in general society.

This Academy was originally founded by Cosmo de' Medici, and afterwards zealously supported by his son Piero, and his grandson Lorenzo.

It would be natural to suppose from its designation that its object was classical, and in particular that it was intended to promote a critical study of the writings of Plato, and to investigate the sources whence he derived his opinions. Although these points (so interesting to the scholar and the philosopher) were not wholly overlooked by its founders, they were far more influenced by an ardent enthusiasm in favour of Platonic principles as opposed to Aristotelian, than by enlightened zeal for the promotion of sound learning.

A fierce contest had for some time been raging on the shores of the Bosphorus, between the rival partisans of Plato and Aristotle. This was now transferred to Italy by means of the multitude of refugee Greeks who flocked thither after the fall of Constantinople. Western Europe had long been bound hand and foot by the philosophy of the Stagyrite. The great object of the schoolmen was to define and defend Christian doctrine strictly in accordance with Aristotelian logic and subtlety, and to regard nothing as duly established excepting so far as it rested on this basis. The opposite party

FICINO.

BORN 1433.—DIED 1499.

were no less bent upon explaining and defining the mysteries of the Christian faith according to Platonic theories. Thus, directly opposed and equally resolute, they carried on an acrimonious warfare, the bitterness of which such men as Pico di Mirandula and Hermolaus Barbarus sought to relieve by fruitless attempts to reconcile the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. The Aristotelians, for about half a century more, continued to exercise, throughout the greater part of Europe, undivided supremacy; while Plato, under the patronage of the Medici, became almost the object of Florentine idolatry.

The freedom of inquiry, and the bold attack of existing prejudices, produced by this controversy, helped to prepare the minds of the learned for the signal revolution of opinion incident to the Reformation. This great event broke the spell of a blind submission to the dogmas both of the Lyceum and the Academy, and pointed to the revealed Word and Will of God, as the sole and infallible rule of faith and practice. The particulars connected with the Platonic Academy form a part of the literary history of Florence at this period, which have only been glanced at by Roscoe in his elegant Biography, but which deserve further notice, not only as illustrating the theological tendency of so remarkable an institution, but also on account of the influence which it exercised upon the imagination and the mental habits of Michael Angelo.

When the council of Florence, having for its object a union between the Greek and Latin Churches, held its sittings in that city, under Pope Eugenio, A. D. 1438, Cosmo de' Medici formed an intimate friendship with Pletho Gemisthus, one of the Greek deputies to the council. He was a man of great learning and persuasive eloquence, and was the master of Bessarion and of the modern Platonists. When he expatiated, as he often did, upon the Platonic mysteries, his friends and adherents fancied that they beheld in him another Plato; and in this sentiment Cosmo shared to such a degree, that he became a convert to his opinions, and resolved to aid in their propagation by founding a Platonic Academy at Florence.

After he had thus imbibed from Pletho Gemisthus a romantic ardour for the Platonism of his school, Cosmo felt anxious to discover a youth whose talents and dispositions, after due culture, might fit him to become the Principal of his projected academy. At length he fixed upon Marsiglio Ficino, the son of his favourite physician, a youth of an acute and inquiring mind, but too nervous for the ordinary business of life, or for the exercise of a sound judgment. Under the direction and at the expense of his patron, he was carefully instructed in the Greek language, and in due time was able to taste the beauties of Plato in the mellifluous and dignified style of the original. In obedience to his father's wishes he also studied medi-

cine, and cultivated music in a Pythagorean and Platonic spirit. He was fond of saying that his father dedicated him to Galen, and Cosmo de' Medici to Plato. To the study of Plato he added that of his commentators Proclus, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Porphyry, &c. A complete translation of the works of Plato into Latin, and afterwards of his commentators*, accompanied by copious comments, and printed at the expense of Lorenzo de' Medici, were the principal fruits of these studies.† The requisite leisure and retirement for producing works so nu-

* The first edition of the translation of Plato was inelegantly printed in a close small character. A finer and more correct edition was subsequently put to press under the special patronage of Lorenzo. Plotinus came out in a fine style of typography A. D. 1492, soon after Lorenzo's death. Ficino translated also many treatises illustrative of Plato, and numerous original treatises on theological and philosophical subjects. The greater part of them are collected in an edition which issued from the Aldine press, 1497, and in one published at Basil, 1560, 2 vols. fol. When the subjects on which he commented, or the authors he translated, were tolerably free from obscurity, his Latin style is easy and perspicuous. As to his fidelity as a translator, critics have recorded contrary opinions. Brucker will not allow that he fairly sounded the depths of Plato; but a high authority, P. D. Huetius, maintains that, though not a literal, he was on the whole a faithful translator.

Besides Plato and Plotinus, Ficino translated and published Dionysius Areopagita, Mercurius Trismegistus, Pomander, and Asclepius; Athenagoras de Resurrectione; Jamblichus de Mysteriis; Proclus de Animâ, &c.; Porphyrius de Divinis; Synesius de Somniis; Theophrastus de Animâ; Alcinous de Doctrinâ Platonis; Speusippus; Pythagoræ Aurea Carmina, and Zenocrates de Morte.

† Schelhorn, Amœn. Liter. vol. i. p. 98.

merous, laborious, and recondite, were secured to him by the favour of the Medici, who presented him with a house and lands finely situated in the neighbourhood of Florence; and afterwards, on his taking orders, gave him valuable church preferment.

The meetings of the Platonic Academy were frequent, and the example of the heads of the state made it an object of ambition to the literary men of Florence to be enrolled among its members. Even Politian and Pico di Mirandula were among the auditors of Ficino's lectures. These meetings were not confined to the city, but, in the genial seasons of the year, took place sometimes at Careggi, or some other of the favourite villas of Lorenzo, and sometimes in the delightful gardens of a villa contiguous to Florence, and belonging to his brother-in-law Bernardo Rucellai, a highly accomplished man, who not only now, but also after Lorenzo's death, devoted himself with great zeal to the interests of the Academy. The casino of the villa was designed by L. Baptista Alberti: the gardens, adorned with fine deciduous trees and evergreens, watered by fountains, and decorated with statues, busts, and vases, enhanced the charms of philosophic converse.

We are not, however, to suppose that Plato, Plotinus, and metaphysics, banished lighter topics. The chief object of not a few of the members was friendly intercourse and general literature. Thus we find that, at some of the meetings, Machiavelli delivered

his learned discourses on the first Decad of Livy. After Bernardo's death, his sons, P. and G. Rucellai, still continued to receive in the same friendly spirit the members of the Academy; and when their relative Leo X. visited Florence, A. D. 1515, the brothers got up a splendid fête to do him honour, at which the Pontiff was present, attended by a brilliant court. On this occasion a temporary theatre was erected in the gardens, and Giovanni Rucellai produced his tragedy of Rosmonda, written in imitation of the Hecuba of Euripides.

The Platonic Academy was broken up in the year 1521, being regarded with suspicion in consequence of a discovery that some of its members, and in particular Jacopo da Diaccetto, were implicated in a political conspiracy against the life of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.* These gardens still exist, under the name of Orti Oricellari. They are situated near the ramparts, at the end of the Via Larga; and though stripped of many of their classical decorations, display broad walks, disposed amidst fine trees and flourishing plantations. A small temple, in front of which is a fine marble bust of Plato, and whose sanctuary is adorned with the busts of the principal early members of the Academy, with their names inscribed beneath them, attest the ancient honours of the place.

The poetry of Michael Angelo proves how deeply

* G. del Rosso, l' Osservatore Fiorentino, vol. iii. p. 94.

he had imbibed the Platonic doctrines; and that he frequented the meetings in the Rucellai gardens, may be inferred from a picture in the Casa Buonarroti, which represents him in a philosophic attitude, addressing a group of young men; the locality being indicated by a sylvan background, amidst which rises a colossal statue, the original of which still adorns the Oricellari gardens.*

In addition to the ordinary meetings of the Academy, the ancient custom, prevalent as late as the time of Longinus, of commemorating with peculiar honours the birthday of Plato, was also introduced at Florence. The heads of the Medici family, on various occasions, distinguished this day by sumptuous banquets, at which the forms of the ancient symposia were imitated.† A profusion of wax-lights graced these assemblages, and speeches and addresses were delivered, specimens of which are to be found in the works of Ficino, who makes particular mention of a festival of this kind, of almost regal magnificence, given by Francesco Bandini, one of the Academicians.

Ficino, both from natural shyness and from his studious tastes, delighted in retirement; his habits were simple and ascetic; but his absence of mind rendered him so careless and disregardful of the ordinary duties of domestic life, that his nephews

* My attention was drawn to this picture, which is in chiaroscuro, by the Cavaliere Buonarroti.

† Schelhorn, Amœn. Lit., vol. i. p. 87.

and nieces, some of whom lived with him, often heartily wished it were possible to rid their uncle of a little of his absorbing love of the Platonic philosophy, and to impart to him a greater share of common sense. Yet he greatly enjoyed the company of such friends as shared in his philosophic tastes; and, above all, in that of Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici, who ever treated him with affectionate kindness and preference. "Nobody was ever more intimate with me—nobody was ever dearer to me," writes Ficino, "than the great Cosmo."

"I have retired," writes Cosmo, "to Careggi, not so much to cultivate my lands as my mind. Come to me as quickly as possible, Marsiglio, and bring with you our Plato's treatise on the 'Summum Bonum,' which I believe you have now translated, according to your promise, from Greek into Latin. There is nothing that I so ardently desire to know as what way of life most readily conducts to happiness. Farewell! and come not without the Orphean lyre.

"'Quæ sit ad felicitatem via.'"

Ficino's reply to this appeal is contained in a letter of some length, commencing thus*:—"I shall be delighted to come to you as soon as I possibly can. What, indeed, can be more grateful to

* Ficini Opera, vol. i. p. 592.

me than to hold converse at Careggi; that is to say, in the land of the Graces, with Cosmo, the parent of the Graces." Then follows an exposition of the Platonic doctrine of happiness, in defining which, he allows his pupil a much greater latitude as to earthly good things than the Attic sage would have sanctioned in one who aspired to become a true philosopher.

In allusion to the above letters, Ficino writes to Lorenzo:—"When we had thus read together, as you (who were present) well know, the treatise of Plato on the 'Summum Bonum,' Cosmo died soon after, as if to enter on the abundant possession of that good of which he had tasted in discussion."

It is painful to contemplate the Pagan tone of this description of the hold of a dying man on happiness,—and such a man, too;—but the condition of the Christian Church, at this period, was so corrupt, and the severance of what was called religion from morality so signal, that this disposition of Cosmo, Ficino, and others, to betake themselves to the fanciful theories of Plato, instead of to the cross of Christ for comfort, was probably a consequence of latent infidelity, engendered by that corruption. Ficino's Epistles testify how bewildered he had become, in spite of his learning, in the mazes of that philosophy. They evidence his sweetness of temper, and his studious diligence; but their prevailing theme, especially throughout Book the Second, is the new Platonism, applied to

metaphysical discussion on subjects too deep for the powers of the writer, or too fanciful to justify serious argument; for instance, one of his letters to Giovanni Cavalcante has this prefix—"An Orphean Comparison of the Sun to God; and an Exposition of the Doctrine of Ideas."* Platonic theories are applied by Ficino to topics of medicine, astrology, and to moral questions. He seldom touches on subjects of general literature. His astrological conceits were such as to fasten upon him the charge of being addicted to magic.† This was not the case; but his medical and philosophical tracts betray a devotion to the occult science which convicts him of the most superstitious credulity.

He was at length recovered from these illusions of fancy by the zealous interference of Pico and Politian. Among his collected epistles, there are several from Lorenzo de' Medici, equally pleasing for their graceful elegant humour, and their tone of affectionate friendship. Some of Ficino's replies catch much of the same spirit; and among them is one of high philosophic interest, commencing as follows:—

"When you and I lately held intimate converse at Careggi on the nature of happiness, we finally came to the same conclusion. You advanced

* Ficini Op. fol. vol. i. pp. 607, 608.

† Schelhorn notices this fact, and also gives an able summary of the wild and superstitious opinions of Ficino and the modern Platonists in his Amœnitates Lit., vol. i. p. 124.

various arguments to prove that happiness consists rather in the bent of the will than of the intellect. It was finally arranged between us that you should record our argument in poetic numbers, I in free prose. You have fulfilled your part of this compact in an elegant poem; I, with God's help, will perform mine as briefly as possible." Such was the origin of Lorenzo's beautiful poem entitled "The Altercation," in which, under the form of dialogue, he clothes some of the most elevated and refined ideas of Platonism in truly poetic diction and imagery. Ficino's part of the compact forms the substance of the epistle of which the above extract is the introduction. It contains many beautiful sentiments, and statements, which only want a Christian foundation to render them practically efficacious. This epistle, and the poem, pleasingly illustrate the intellectual cast of the discussions which occasionally took place between Ficino and his friends. How much Politian and Pico loved his society will be seen by the following extract from a letter addressed to him by the former:—"I wish, when you find it too hot in your villa at Careggi, you would condescend to visit my rustic retreat at Fiesole. We have an abundance of water, and the sun does not overpower us with his rays in this deep valley surrounded with hills,—nor are we ever without fine air. My little villa is very secluded; it lies embosomed among woods, but in some directions may be said to overlook all Flo-

rence. Here Pico often steals in upon me unexpectedly from his grove of oaks, and draws me away with him from my hiding place, to partake of one of his pleasant suppers, temperate, as you well know, and brief, but always seasoned with delightful conversation and humour. You will perhaps prefer coming to me, where you shall not fare worse, and will be better off for wine,—for herein I may venture to vie even with Pico."

Among the moral blemishes of Ficino was that of excessive adulation. It breaks forth, again and again, in various parts of his writings*, and proves how slightly his philosophy controlled and influenced his moral sense. When it suited his purpose to flatter a pope, he scrupled not to denominate the profligate Sixtus IV. "the sublime Phœnix of theology, master in a peculiar sense of the lofty citadel of Pallas, and thence promulgating divine oracles. Sing unto Sixtus a new song."†

It would be easy to multiply proofs of this disposition from his epistles, but the following specimen will suffice:—

"Marsiglio Ficino suppliantly commends himself to Raphael Riario, cardinal of S. Giorgio.‡

"After we quitted you yesterday I could not

* Schelhorn, Ficini Vita, p. 78.

† "Sixtus sublimis theologio Phœnix excelsus Palladis arces ante alios possidens divinum ibi oraculum in singulis consulit." —*Schelhorn*, vol. i. p. 75.

‡ Ficini Op. fol. vol. i. p. 769.

forbear from vehemently envying your attendants the privilege of your society, sweeter, I may say, than ambrosia and nectar. Therefore, lest I should positively die of envy, I eagerly return to them today, who are thus privileged to sit down, as it were, at the banquets of the gods. . . ."

In a long letter which follows, there is a wonderful mixture of bland flattery and useful advice. He particularly cautions the cardinal against the danger of listening to adulatory friends and dependants, quite unconscious, as it would seem, that he was himself foremost in their ranks; and in a third letter he administers the same unctuous application with peculiar skill, and as an adept in the art.

He never shines more in his epistles than in those addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici; for although this same adulation more or less pervades them, they are written in a spirit of affectionate friendship, and sometimes of playfulness, like one who had the fullest confidence in the good-will and kindness of him who is their object.

Ficino cherished an almost idolatrous veneration for Plato. His bust stood in his chamber, and before it a lamp was kept perpetually burning.* He not unfrequently, says Schelhorn, boasted of responsive raptures and visions, of predictions, and celestial dreams, vouchsafed to him; and in order

* Burlamacchi, Vit. Savonarola.

to defend himself against the suspicion of paganism, attempted to prove that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity might be traced in Plato's dialogue,—the Crito. He even went so far as to maintain that the character of Socrates was a sort of adumbration of that of Christ, and that it would be well if the Platonic philosophy were to be read and taught in Christian churches.*

There is so much in his writings that is irreconcilable with the Christian faith, that he only escaped being formally arraigned for heresy in consequence of the effectual interference of Cardinal Soderini, Hermolaus Barbarus, and others of his influential friends, with Pope Innocent VIII. Holding valuable preferment, he was anxious to appear a good son of the Church, and with this view we often find him, in his treatises and discourses, vainly attempting to reconcile the statements of Plato with those of St. Paul.

A curious instance of his superstition occurs in the dedication of Plotinus to Piero de' Medici, in the course of which he tells him that at the moment of his illustrious father's death, he beheld, as it were, his soul breaking from its earthly fetters, under the emblem of a star of unusual brilliancy, hovering over the Medici villa, and followed, for three successive days, by wonderful coruscations of flame all around Careggi. He then gravely enu-

* Schelhorn, Amœn. Lit. vol. i. p. 752.

merates various prodigies which for two days before had announced the coming misfortune.

After this enumeration of the follies and infirmities of Ficino, we add with pleasure that he lived to renounce not only his astrological conceits, but that, subsequently to the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, he acknowledged and lamented his theological aberrations.* Spondanus assures us that under the preaching and influence of the celebrated monk Savonarola, he became, in his latter days, a humble and devout learner in the school of Christ; and he himself tells us in one of his epistles, that on occasion of a severe illness, he found there was more comfort to be derived from a single sentence of the New Testament than from all the dogmas of the whole tribe of philosophers.

Ficino was a man of extremely diminutive stature, of weak nerves, and of hypochondriacal tendencies. He died in 1499, at his villa Caregiana, aged 66. Baronius relates the following curious story, on the authority of Michaele Mercato, which his grandfather of the same name used to tell. He and Ficino were intimate friends, and both devotees of Plato. They often conversed upon the mysterious question of what remains of man after death; and as their faith in his immortality sometimes wavered, they one day joined hands, in token of a mutual and solemn en-

* Schelhorn, Amœn. Lit. vol. i. p. 73., confirms the testimony of Spondanus.

gagement, that whichever of the two died first should appear, if possible, to the other, and tell him whether there indeed was a future state. Not long after this compact had been made, the attention of Mercato was arrested very early one morning, when engaged in philosophical study, by the trampling of a horse's feet in the road below; it stopped at his door; when he distinctly heard his friend Ficino's voice exclaiming, "Oh! Michael, Michael, it is all true!" Struck by the well known voice, he eagerly pushed his head out of the window, and distinctly beheld the back of Ficino, as he darted onwards, seated on a white horse. He followed him with his voice, "Marsiglio! Marsiglio!" but he vanished from his sight. Deeply affected by what he had witnessed, he hastened to make inquiries after his friend, and found that he had died at the very hour in which this incident had occurred.

The influence exercised by the Platonic Academy upon the literati of Florence may often be traced in their writings, and is imprinted on much of their poetry. It is also distinctly to be traced in the artistic works of Michael Angelo, inducing a lofty idealism, a love of allegory, and mystical views of nature and art. We shall recur to the fact more particularly when treating of his poetry and sculpture.

CHAPTER V.

A SKETCH OF THE MODERN PLATONISTS AND THEIR OPINIONS.

As Michael Angelo's poetry and art were more or less influenced by Platonic theories, we propose in this chapter to place before our readers a brief sketch of the peculiar dogmas and opinions of that sect of the Platonists with which, as a member of the Florentine Academy, he became associated. This sect originated at Alexandria, in the third century, and from thence to the sixth exercised a potent influence in almost every part of the Roman empire. Its founder, Ammonius Saccas, was born of Christian parents, and educated under Pantænus and Athenagoras, learned and eminent Christian teachers, but who set their disciples the example of philosophising upon the doctrines of the Gospel with a freedom wholly at variance with the exclusive claims of a Divine Revelation. Ammonius in this respect went far beyond his teachers, and, becoming fired with the ambition of founding a new sect which should combine the most popular principles both of heathenism and Christianity, he plunged into the wildest latitudinarianism of opinion, and availed himself of the great name of Plato in

order to attach authority and importance to his pantheistic creed; for such it was. Plato, in fact, would not have known himself in the disguises which Ammonius and his followers put upon him.*

The doctrine of emanation common to Plato, to Aristotle, and to the Oriental schools, was pushed by them to the utmost latitude. They held that the Eternal Cause, the Fountain of Deity, lay hid in the impenetrable abyss of his own Infinite Essence; whence, as from an Ocean of Being, emanated innumerable gods of various powers, together with angels, spirits, and demons, some of whom animated the sun, the planets, and the stars, while to others was assigned the administration of this lower world. Among the inferior gods, they classed the heathen deities, assigning to them a real being, and claiming for them appropriate honours and secondary worship. In this way they asserted that the infinite chasm between God and man was filled up; and that thus a connecting medium between heaven and earth was constituted, by which the divine goodness flowed forth to man, and the prayers of man ascended to God. They added that, although few of the sons of men had

* "Totum quoque systema Platonicum adulterandum, et mutandum adjiciendum, et ex aliis systematibus inserendum erat, quo factum est, ut totâ fere facie a Platonis imagine deficeret."—*Brucheri Hist. Philos.*, vol. ii. p. 364, de Sectâ Eclecticâ.

attained to a right knowledge of the First Cause, in consequence of his infinite profundity, yet all might adore this lower race of gods, and partake of their benefits.

In the same spirit in which they admitted the heathen divinities into their theological system, they also adopted the grossest fables and allegories of the pagan mythology, pretending that beneath the integument of such stories, however impure and revolting, important truth and practical wisdom lay concealed.

When treating of the supposed Divine Being, and power of the stars, many of the sect wandered into the wilds of astrology, and patronised its absurdities.*

The favourite object of Ammonius was to bring about a harmony of all religions, and a reconciliation between all philosophic sects, excepting the Epicurean, which he found unmanageable. In furtherance of this pantheistic scheme, which subsequently had a strong advocate in a disciple of the Ammonian school, the Emperor Julian, recourse was had to the grossest literary frauds, and most far-fetched analogies and interpretations. There is little doubt, for instance, that the writings attributed to Hermes now extant, as well as the oracles of Zo-

* Bruckeri Hist. Philosophiæ, vol. ii. p. 189. de Sectâ Eclecticâ. Mosheim's Commentaries on Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. ss. 30. 32 34. and his Dissertations, p. 136.

roaster, were among the numerous forgeries of the modern Platonists.*

They freely borrowed, in the same spirit, from the Bible, whatever suited their purpose, and did all in their power to draw over unwary Christians to their ranks by persuading them that they were the true interpreters of its doctrines.

With the same view they laboured, by fantastic comments upon the text of Plato, to accommodate his theology to that of the Christian Trinity; they also adopted the statements of the Bible respecting the human soul, good and bad angels, and some of the most essential points of morality. Whilst they reserved their principal homage for Plato, they admitted that Christ was an illustrious and eminent teacher of heavenly wisdom, but they rejected the doctrine of his Divinity, and the whole scheme of human redemption; assigning him only a higher degree of authority than they conceded to an Orpheus, or a Pythagoras. The fact of his miracles they could not deny, but ascribed them to magic, and maintained that similar powers had been exercised by Apollonius Tyanæus, Apuleius, and others.

They also did honour, though with more reserve, to the memory of his apostolical followers, of

* "Id vero non fictis tantum miraculorum historiis, sed libris quoque suppositiis factum est, quos Zoroastri, ejusque discipulis, Hermeti, Orpheo tribuisse jam monuimus."—*Brucheri*, vol. ii. p. 379.

whom they complained as having gone far beyond the intentions of their Founder, in the exterminating warfare they had carried on with every form of idolatry. The morals they inculcated upon their select disciples were rigid, and conceived in the highest spirit of asceticism; but they willingly conceded a greater liberty to those of their followers who had no taste for such austerities. By these arts they entrapped many men of superficial knowledge into the fatal conclusion* that the new Platonism and Christianity were almost one and the same.

In studying the principles and results of ancient philosophy, especially as it existed among the Grecks, nothing is so interesting as the inquiry, in what degree the light of human reason has been able to advance any satisfactory arguments in proof of the immortality of the soul. The ardent and anxious feelings with which Plato prosecutes this inquiry, in various parts of his eloquent writings, is that which imparts to them such high and undying interest. Many and beautiful are the

* "Quæ præstantiora et excellentiora Christianorum essent dogmata, quam ut *negari* reprobarique possent, ea, tacito quidem consilio, surriperet, suoque ita recocta et reficta systemati innecteret, ut Christiana quidem videri, suisque placitis obesse nequirent, et tamen eam omnem, quam Christiani tantoperè extollebant, doctrinam exhibere possent. Reliqua quæ aptari suo doctrinæ ædificio nullo modo poterant, imitatione et similitudine verborum et sententiarum exprimere studebant," &c. — *Brucker. Hist. Phil.*, vol. ii. p. 373.

passages in which he asserts the affirmative of the question, and noble the inferences which he draws from the doctrine, more especially in the 10th book of his Republic, in the Apology for Socrates, in the Gorgias, the Phædrus, but, above all, in the Phædo. The greater part of this dialogue is devoted to the argumentative discussion of this great question; and those portions of it which describe the demeanour and the spirit of Socrates in his last moments are composed with a pathos and tenderness scarcely to be surpassed. Yet Cicero, though an ardent admirer of Plato, has clearly shown that, in spite of all his researches, and those of other philosophers, the darkness which encompasses this great question is impenetrable by human reason. It will in fact be found that not to philosophic acuteness, but to patriarchal tradition, and to scattered rays of light derived from the Bible, is chiefly to be ascribed the glimmering hope of a future existence which prevailed in the ancient world.*

Nothing, in fact, can be more obvious than the loftiness of Plato's aim in his writings, and the inconclusiveness of his arguments. When he touches on the essential differences between mind and matter, when he maintains that matter is resolvable

* This fact is ably established in Ellis's learned work, entitled The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature.

into parts, but that mind is one and indivisible and is therefore probably immaterial and immortal, we subscribe to the ingenuity of his distinctions, and allow a certain degree of probability to his conclusions; but when, after this inductive process, he suddenly deviates into the fanciful hypothesis of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, and rests the principal weight of his argument on this assumption, and maintains that knowledge is merely the revived memory of ideas familiar to us in a former state of existence, and that therefore mind never dies,—we feel that the all-important conclusion to which our assent is demanded, reposes after all on the baseless fabric of a vision.

And yet, however weak the argument, what grandeur invests the moral inferences with which it is associated! How ably does he press home the reflection that if the soul be, as he maintains, immortal, its discipline and preparation for that glorious destiny ought to form the unceasing object of its highest solicitude![†] How noble the enthusiasm with which, under this impression, he exclaims, "I should not be surprised if Euripides uttered the truth, when he said, 'who knows whether to live be not death; and to die, life? And we perhaps are in reality dead.' I have myself

* Platonis Phædo, ss. 28, 29, &c.

† Phædo, s. 57, &c.

heard from one of the wise, that our present existence is death, and that the body is our sepulchre." * How winged the sentiment that virtue is to be followed for its own sake, because its essence is divine, and that it cannot be communicated by human agency, but is the gift of God; that the good, the perfect, and the fair, consist in the knowledge of the first good, the first perfect, and the first fair; in other words, that similitude to God, and union with Him, form the proper end and felicity of an immortal nature; and that he who has practically attained this knowledge is truly happy, although what are usually termed evils, such as exile, persecution, or death, should be his portion.†

The mixture of trembling solicitude and exulting hope, displayed by Plato in various passages with reference to the truth or error of his reasoning on this great question, intimates his sense of the

* The passage in the original is so fine that we must be allowed to quote it: —

Οὐ γάρ τοι θαυμάζοιμ' ἄν, εἰ Εὐριπίδης ἀληθῆ ἐν τοῖσδε λέγει, λέγων, Τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθάνειν, τὸ κατθάνεῖν δὲ ζῆν; καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν· Ὅπερ ἤδη του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν, ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν· καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμά εστιν ἡμῶν σῆμα.—*Gorgias*, edit. Bipont. vol. iv. p. 100.

How finely has Milton caught the spirit of this passage in one of his sonnets: —

"Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load
Of Death, called Life, which us from Life doth sever."

† Plato de Repub., edit. Bip. vol. vii. p. 320.

insufficiency of the light of nature; and this avowal is signally and emphatically brought out in that memorable passage in the "Apology," in which he makes Socrates declare that the sole reason why the oracle of Delphi had pointed to him as the wisest of men, was, that while other sophists were proud and pretending, he had ever deeply felt and had emphatically avowed that *he knew nothing.*

The Plato of the academic groves, the author of the Phædo, the humble and earnest inquirer after divine truth, is the most sublime and captivating of ancient sages; but the modern Platonists have no claim upon our sympathy, and little upon our admiration. As it is fabled of Prometheus, that after animating a statue of clay by means of fire stolen from heaven, he set himself in array against Jupiter; so these lofty pretenders, who owed all that is most elevated and impressive in their system to the great discoveries of revelation, did their utmost in return to corrupt its purity and to sap its foundations.

Though well aware that life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel, they would fain have had it believed that the glorious discovery principally belonged to them, and that the best proofs of it were to be found within the sphere of their own misty and unintelligible metaphysics.

The essential vision of God, which Plato humbly hoped might be the final reward of the pure in

heart in a higher state of existence, they fanatically persuaded themselves they had attained here below*, by a process which they termed Theurgy†, and which appears to have been compounded of the choicest mysteries of Demonology.

Plotinus macerated his body by extreme abstinence, to the injury of his health. He sometimes complained of the humiliation of having to endure the incumbrance of such a companion; and his last words, had he been a sinless being, would have been less open to the charge of excessive pride and self-righteousness:—"I go," he said, "to resolve whatever is divine in me into whatever is divine in the universe." Gibbon has well described the New Platonists as men of profound thought and intense application; but adds, that "by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labours had contributed much less to improve than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers,—the whole compass of moral, natural, and

* "Tantoperè vero hunc sibi enthusiasmum cordi hæc secta habuit, ut quod Plato post hanc demum vitam fieri posse statuebat, vivis adhuc philosophis obtingere posse hi pseudo-Platonici contenderent," &c. — *Brucher*, vol. ii. p. 365.

† "Hic gradus theurgorum est, qui ita dicitur, quod homines in Deos transmutat." — *Brucher*, vol. ii. p. 459.

"Sic (anima) ipsi Deo jungatur, et intellectui divino ex quo particula ejus quasi avulsa emanavit, præsens sistatur, eumque sine imagine intueatur, et ita divina communione fruatur." — *Brucher*, vol. ii. p. 462.

mathematical science,—was neglected by the New Platonists; whilst they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato on subjects of which both those philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy; they flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with demons and spirits; and, by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic."

Porphyry states that the familiar spirit of Plotinus once became visible, and proved to be a god, not a demon; and that, in requital of the attempts of one Olympius, a sorcerer, to injure him by his spells, he was able, by his magical power, to bend and twist his body like a thread-paper, though at the time they were far distant from each other.

Such were the ancient characteristics of the school of which, under the abused name of Plato, Cosmo de' Medici became the ardent patron. In an age in which the Church of Christ was steeped in sin and corruption, and in which princes and public men were altogether swayed by Machiavellian policy, he probably found relief from the disgust with which his more honest mind surveyed

such a state of religion and morals, in the lofty sentiments and elevated pretensions which more or less belong to every form of Platonism. Moreover, the pantheistic tendencies of the system were carefully veiled by Pletho Gemisthus and Bessarion from the dread of ecclesiastical censures; but those who will take the pains to examine for themselves the commentaries of Marsiglio Ficino upon Plotinus and his followers, will find every where abundant proofs that such was its bearing and tendency.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POLITICAL CHARACTER OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI CONSIDERED.

In the Fourth Chapter we have contemplated the advantages accruing to the youthful Buonarotti from his intimate association, through his patron's favour, with a galaxy of learned men, zealously engaged, under his auspices, in promoting the progress of literature, philosophy, and taste. Lorenzo shines forth among them, not as a mere Mecænas, but as himself occupying one of the foremost places as a scholar, a philosopher, and a poet; and in these capacities, as well as in his generous patronage of learning, his name will never cease to attract to itself the esteem and admiration of the most distant ages.

But there is another point of view in which it is essential to contemplate him, with reference to many of the coming facts of the present biography; we mean his political character. Even while his power was at its height, he was regarded by the popular party at Florence with great jealousy, from their conviction that it was his fixed aim to deprive them of what remained to them of their constitu-

tional rights, and to stifle altogether the independent functions of their ancient republic.

Soon after his death, this party, availing itself of a favourable occasion, excited the people to cast off the yoke thus imposed upon them; an act which cost Florence a struggle extending through thirty-eight years, and which at last terminated disastrously for the cause of liberty, by the establishment of a hated tyranny, in the person of the notorious Alessandro de' Medici.

When this struggle commenced, Michael Angelo's feelings of gratitude and affection to the memory of Lorenzo were fresh and ardent, and he would have deemed it almost a parricidal act to have taken any part against the interests of his patron's family. Nevertheless, in his heart of hearts, he was a partizan of the old republic; and in after life, when the same struggle was revived, and the legitimate descendants of Lorenzo had all passed from the stage, finding himself at full liberty to exercise his independent judgment, he ranged himself, with all the fervour of patriotism, in the ranks of those who were prepared, at any sacrifice, to maintain the liberties of Florence. It therefore becomes the duty of his biographer briefly to sketch the mode in which the ancient constitution of the republic was practically superseded by the Medici.

After Florence became, in the course of the twelfth century, an independent republic, its institutions gradually verged towards intense demo-

cracy. Its ancient government had been chiefly swayed by the nobility; but when the fierce contests which long raged between the Guelph and Ghibelline factions had terminated in the complete triumph of the former, A. D. 1266, the essential powers of legislation and magistracy were thrown into the scale of the commons.* Still the old nobility, entrenched within their fortress-like palaces, surrounded by their armed followers, and skilful in combining means for mutual defence, long continued to exercise, in defiance of the laws, no small degree of power and influence. Often did the streets of Florence flow with blood, during the fierce contests which ensued between them and the citizens; and often did they successfully trample upon popular rights by means altogether unconstitutional. Witnesses, for example, in those times, scarcely dared to appear against noble offenders, who scrupled not to maintain their pretensions by bribery and assassination, no less than by open force. This same spirit, more or less, pervaded most of the Italian republics, and produced in some of them the utter extinction of liberty, and the establishment of one and another form of usurped and tyrannous domination; and it was not till towards the close of the thirteenth century that these violent invasions of popular rights were effectually checked in Florence.

* Machiavelli, Istorie Fiorentine, vol. i. p. 66., edit. Milan, 8vo., A. D. 1813.

A state of tranquillity of short duration followed these fierce collisions, during which Florence, as described by Machiavelli, was singularly prosperous and happy. "Never," he says, "was our city in a greater or happier condition, than in these times, being abundant in men, in riches, and in reputation: the armed citizens amounted in number to 30,000, and those of the country districts to 70,000. All Tuscany obeyed her Government, partly as subjects, partly as allies; and, although there were still suspicions and animosities between the people and the nobles, yet they led to no malignant results; but the two bodies lived in concord and peace." *

The Florentine constitution took the form to which it adhered till the fall of the republic, in 1282, and was full of singular devices for the repression of the undue influence of the nobility.

It was based upon a division of the citizens exercising commerce, into various arts, called greater and less. The greater arts, seven in number, had each its separate council, its distinctive standard, and its elective privileges. The lesser, or inferior arts, were fourteen in number, and had also their peculiar privileges, though of a lower grade. The executive magistrates, denominated Priors from the thirteenth century downwards, were at first six, and afterwards eight in number. They were elected from the six quarters of the city, and from each of the greater arts. To these was added in the same

* Mach. Istorie Fior. lib. ii. p. 84.

century a chief magistrate, called the Gonfaloniere of Justice, at whose disposal a numerous civic guard or militia was placed, for the purpose of preserving the peace of the city, and effectually repressing the encroachments of the nobility. This officer, together with the Priors, formed the seignory, or executive government, and a public palace was assigned them. They held office only two months together. All citizens within a certain grade were capable of bearing office, and were admitted to it by lot from lists made out according to certain defined principles of favouritism. In the earlier stages of the republic there were four civic councils, which were resolved, during the thirteenth century, with great advantage to the public service*, into two. The one, consisting of 300 members, all plebeians, was called Consiglio del Popolo; the other, consisting of 250 members, into which the nobles, under certain restrictions, might enter, was called Consiglio di Commune. They had to decide upon any propositions made by the executive power, whether of a political or legislative nature. The members were changed, by the same rotation as the magistracy, every two months. Thus the councils, the magistracy, and the chief magistrates, were perpetually changing; and the principal citizens in their turn were called upon to assume and to lay down office, to command and to obey. The lottery of names was intended to act as a complete check to undue

* Machiavelli, lib. ii. p. 108. 120.

influence in the election to offices, but there were various secret means of effectually exercising it. It will be easily conceived how devoid, a government, so constituted, must have been of stedfast policy, or of fixed principle, and how peculiarly exposed to the agitating influences of faction and party.* The head, or the heads, of a successful faction became, so long as their popularity endured, the real depositaries of power; and a constitutional expedient existed for actually investing them with it by a suspension of the safeguards of personal liberty and property. This expedient, termed the Balia, consisted in a delegation of the legislative and executive functions of the state, for a defined period of time, to a certain number of the citizens chosen out of the dominant party †, by the parliament or general assembly of the people. The dictatorship thus constituted, might, on its expiration, be carried on by renewed Balias for further periods of of time. Balias were sometimes granted for several years; and as they were usually called for and created under the influence of some dominant faction, they were rendered the ready instruments of its ambition or vengeance. Proscription, capital punishment, sequestration of property, and the exile of the principal families of the opposite party, followed in their train. It was chiefly by means of the Balia that the great principles of justice and

* Machiavelli, lib. ii. p. 139.

† Sismondi, Hist. Repub. Ital. vol. x. p. 361.

humanity were so grossly and frequently violated during the existence of the republic, and that ambition and perfidy enacted their foul deeds beneath the semblance of constituted authority. The successive triumphs of opposite parties, and the vicissitudes of their failure or success, were the habitual precursors of these often-repeated scenes of vengeance and proscription.

To this description of the constitution of the Florentine republic we will add, that the administration of criminal justice belonged to a foreign podesta, or rather to two foreign magistrates, the podesta and the capitano del popolo, whose jurisdiction appears to have been concurrent. These offices were preserved till the innovations of the Medici.*

The struggle for power between the nobility and the citizens was carried on for nearly two centuries with various fortune, but towards the middle of the fourteenth century the triumph of democracy † became so signal that nobility rendered a man ineligible for office. At this time, what were called the ordinances of justice were enacted. They were intended to humble and curb the nobles, and were regarded in after-times as the bulwarks of demo-

* Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 422.

† Machiavelli, lib. ii. p. 135.

"In Firenze, vincendo il popolo, i nobili privi de' magistrati rimavenevano, e volendo racquistargli, era loro necessaria con il governo, con l' animo, con il mode del vivere, simili ai popolani non solamente essere, ma parere."—*Machiavelli,* lib. iii. p. 141.

cracy; but they effected their object by a signal violation of the great principles of equity. Though these ordinances were subsequently relaxed in order to admit the nobility to office, it was only on the degrading condition that they should, by way of qualification, first enrol their names in the plebeian order. This humiliation of the ancient patricians was followed by the elevation of many leading families into what may justly be termed plebeian nobility. Such were the Albizzi and the Medici, whose families had taken a prominent part on the popular side in these struggles.

Machiavelli has well observed that republican institutions are apt to produce a mixed interchange of licence and servitude. In certain extraordinary emergencies, the Florentines resorted to a dictatorship in the person of some foreigner of distinction. Though bound by oath not to alter the statutes of the city, the object of their choice, in such case, exercised almost absolute executive powers. Charles of Anjou, and Robert, king of Naples, had each filled this office, the one for ten, the other for five years. It was a dangerous precedent, as was proved in the the year 1342, when Walter de Brienne, titular Duke of Athens, was invested with this power for life. Had he been a man of sound judgment and enterprise, he might probably have established a permanent sovereignty; but his administration, from the beginning, was signalised by caprice, tyranny, and blood; and, after giving Florence a terrible example of the evils

of despotism, he was driven from his post by the concurrent efforts of all parties and factions.

The bitter consequences of popular licence were severely experienced in Florence in the year 1378, when the low populace, or the Ciampi as they were called, became ascendant, and signalised their triumph by plunder and conflagration. Though this insurrection was soon put down, it was the precursor of a plebeian tyranny, which terminated, in 1382, by the accession of the Guelph aristocracy to power, under the auspices of the Albizzi family.* After resorting to the usual expedient of proscribing or banishing their opponents, they presided over the state for nearly half a century, with an ability and moderation unusual in the Florentine annals. As time advanced, this party, by means of Balias, and by otherwise undue influence, made various encroachments on the constitution, some of which were effectually resisted by Giovanni de' Medici, whose high character and great wealth first raised his family to eminence, and who, from thus taking the part of the people, was regarded by them as a champion of their rights. His son Cosmo, on succeeding to his father's fortune, soon proved that, in addition to his good sense, quiet firmness, and amiable qualities, he possessed the talents proper to a statesman.

His extensive commercial connections, and his

* Machiavelli, lib. iv. p. 204. &c.

intimacy with the Sforza family at Milan, rendered him the most influential citizen of Florence. Liberal and almost lavish of his wealth, he was the friend of every man who needed support or assistance, the patron of learning and art, and the generous founder or supporter of many noble establishments devoted to useful or charitable objects. Though jealous, like his father, of the encroachments of the Albizzi, he did nothing that could justly provoke their displeasure or resentment; but in secret they beheld in him the head of a party whose growing influence must soon prove incompatible with the maintenance of their own supremacy. He was therefore to be put down at all events. At this juncture (A. D. 1433), the death of Nicola d'Albizzi deprived his party of a wise and able leader, and subjected them to the guidance of his son Rinaldo, whose impetuous and fiery temper caused his own ruin and that of his family. Cosmo, though viewed by him with the utmost jealousy, gave him, in consequence of his prudence and moderation, no legal ground of complaint. A Balia therefore, whose concealed object was the persecution, and if possible the destruction, of this eminent citizen, was resorted to by Rinaldo. It was readily granted; but the populace who authorised it had no suspicion of its end and aim. The next step was the imprisonment of Cosmo; and if the other leading men of the Albizzi faction had been as unscrupulous as their leader, he would have been beheaded forthwith.

Even as it was, the gold of Cosmo, secretly administered to the Gonfaloniere* Bernardo Guadagni, effected more for his preservation than the fact that no crime could be laid to his charge, nor any process of trial be attempted. Rinaldo was at length forced to concur in commuting death by the executioner into a sentence of exile.

Cosmo quitted Florence, almost wondering at his escape. Wherever he went, public honours were lavished upon him; and scarcely a year elapsed before he was recalled to Florence by the voice of the great majority of her citizens; and only a short time before his death their attachment to his person and character was expressively recorded, by their hailing him with the honourable title of Pater Patriæ, a title which was finally engraven on his tomb. And now the same scenes were renewed which had so often occurred before in the annals of Florentine faction. Not only the heads and leading men of the Albizzi party were exiled, but several were put to death. A Balia was appointed for ten years, for the express purpose of excluding all the Albizzi from the magistracy: in other words, the legitimate functions of the republic were suspended during this long period, and its powers were concentrated in Cosmo de' Medici and Neri Capponi, the latter of whom was devoted to the interests of Cosmo. At

* Sismondi, Hist. Rep. Ital. vol. ix. p. 41.; Roscoe's L. de' Medici, vol. i. p. 23.

the close of the specified term, the same dictatorship was renewed upon the plea of fresh danger; and during twenty-one years in which they administered the government, there were six Balias, always constituted according to legal form.* For the three years following the death of Capponi, Balia was suspended, and the power of Cosmo somewhat declined; but it was then revived; and Luca Pitti, whose wealth and position marked him out as the rival of Cosmo, was won over by his astute policy to support his family interests. Upon the death of Cosmo, in the year 1464, the friends of liberty, under the influence of Nicola Soderini, again raised their heads, and Luca Pitti professed to join them. The weak health of Cosmo's son, Piero, and the youth of his grandsons, created a favourable conjuncture; but their measures were ill taken, and Pitti proved treacherous; his real object being, to take the place of the Medici: the party of Piero therefore triumphed. The Balia was again resorted to, for a space of ten years, and the faction of the Medici, confirmed in power, wreaked vengeance on their opponents by confiscation and banishment.

For a brief moment, the emigrants, who were both numerous and influential, took courage, in consequence of the show of assistance vouchsafed to them by Venice and other states; but this in the

* Sismondi, Hist. Rep. Ital. vol. x. p. 163. and 294. &c.

end came to nothing; and, in the year 1468, a peace was concluded between those powers and Florence, which left the party of the Medici at full liberty to renew their proscriptions, and to deepen the foundations of their power.*

Nothing can more strongly prove how successfully the set of men who governed Florence in the name of Piero de' Medici, had stifled the sentiment of constitutional liberty in that city, by their measures, than the easy way in which the reins of government passed from the feeble grasp of Piero, at his death, into the hands of his sons Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici. The death of Giuliano, upon the breaking out of the conspiracy of the Pazzi, left Lorenzo in full possession of the sovereignty of Florence; and his measures were of a nature to chase away even the shadow of republican liberty. He abolished the two Councils, which for centuries had exercised a control over the executive, by resolving them into one, consisting of seventy members, entirely subject to his nomination, and therefore to his will. Thus all the various magistrates were appointed at his dictation, and he concentred in his person the whole power and conduct of the state.

The principal steps of that wily policy by means of which Lorenzo, at the time of his death, had rendered his power next to absolute, have been

* Sismondi, Hist. vol. x. p. 308.

pointed out by one of his contemporaries, Jacopo Pitti, in his Chronicle *, extending from the year 1494 to 1520.

On a review, therefore, of the preceding facts, we would say, in the words of Mr. Hallam,—"As a patriot we can never bestow upon Lorenzo de' Medici the meed of disinterested virtue. He completed the subversion of the Florentine republic which his two immediate ancestors had so well prepared."

"Whatever was the ability of Lorenzo as a statesman," says Sismondi, "it is not in this capacity that he can be placed in the rank of the greatest men of whom Italy boasts. Honour such as this is reserved for those who, superior to personal interests, secure, by the labour of their life, the peace, the glory, or the liberty of their country. Lorenzo, on the contrary, habitually pursued an egoistic policy; he sustained by bloody executions a usurped power;

* This Chronicle, which is to be found in vol. i. of the Archivio Storico Italiano, Firenze, 1850, is stated by the learned editors of that collection, to be the best existing narrative of the period of time which it embraces. The editors express much surprise that Roscoe's partiality for the Medici should have induced him to state that Lorenzo, in the latter part of his life, seriously meditated resigning his power to his son Piero, and of going into philosophical retirement. "Certo egli è (they go on to say), che a quel tempo cominciò a disporre, a sua posta, così delle arme, così del danaro del Publico; senza quelle ambagi e questi scaltrissimi infingimenti, coi quali il vecchio ed astuto Cosimo era uso gabbare l' altrui pecoragine e mantellare la propria ambizione." See further extracts from Pitti's Chronicle in Appendix, No. I.

he every day added to the weight of a yoke detested by a free city; he deprived the legitimate magistrates of the authority assigned to them by the constitution; and he excluded his fellow-citizens from that political career, in which, before his time, they had developed so much talent. We shall see, in the sequel of this history, the fatal consequences of his ambition, and of the overthrow of the national institutions." *

* Sismondi, Hist. des Repub. Ital., vol. xi. p. 369.

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI.—MICHAEL ANGELO PROSECUTES HIS STUDIES OF ANATOMY, ETC.—PIERO DE' MEDICI SUCCEEDS HIS FATHER AS HEAD OF THE FLORENTINE GOVERNMENT.—HIS CHARACTER AND CONDUCT.—INVASION OF ITALY BY CHARLES VIII. OF FRANCE, AND ITS CAUSES.—HE APPROACHES FLORENCE.—THE MEDICI ARE EXPELLED, AND THE POPULAR PARTY TRIUMPH.—A CURIOUS DREAM.—MICHAEL ANGELO RETIRES TO BOLOGNA, WHERE HE IS HOSPITABLY ENTERTAINED.—EMPLOYED TO FINISH THE TOMB OF ST. DOMINIC BY NICOLA PISANO.—MERITS AND INFLUENCE OF THAT GREAT ARTIST.

1492 TO 1494.

In the year 1492, Michael Angelo's bright prospects were suddenly clouded by the untimely death of his generous patron Lorenzo de' Medici. How profound was his grief may well be imagined. For a time he felt inconsolable, and seemed to have lost one of his most impelling motives to application and diligence. Youthful enterprise at length resumed its empire, and he undertook, at his father's residence, whither he at first returned, a statue of Hercules, which is mentioned by both his biographers. Condivi describes it as of bronze, and Vasari states that it was to be seen for some years

in the Strozzi Palace, but finally came into the possession of Francis I. It is supposed no longer to exist.

He was intimate with the prior of the monastery of Santo Spirito, and about this time executed for its church a crucifix in wood of a size rather less than the natural. The prior, who highly appreciated his talents, accommodated him with an apartment for the prosecution of his anatomical studies. He soon took to the dissecting knife; but the use of it so painfully affected his nervous system, that for a time it seemed as though he must cast it away for ever. Nothing but an unquenchable desire to render himself a complete master of design, could have enabled him to overcome this difficulty. At length he was able to use it with more indifference and with almost surgical precision, and subjects were frequently supplied to him from the hospital of the monastery.

"We have in this great master," as Sir C. Bell justly observes, "a proof of the manner in which genius submits to labour, in order to attain perfection. He patiently, and painfully to himself, underwent the severe toil of the anatomist, to acquire a power of design such as it is hardly to be supposed could be duly appreciated either then or now."

Bell adds, that he made careful examinations of the anatomical studies of Michael Angelo while at Florence, and found that he had avoided the errors

of artists of less genius, who, in showing their learning, deviate from living nature. He recognised the utmost accuracy of anatomy in his studies, particularly in his pen-and-ink sketches of the knee; for example, every point of bone, muscle, tendon, and ligament, was marked, and perhaps a little exaggerated. But he found, on surveying the limbs of the statues for which some of these drawings had been made, that this peculiarity was not visible: there were none of the details of anatomy, but only the effects of muscular action.*

Upon the death of Lorenzo, his eldest son, Piero, succeeded to his almost princely dignity and authority without opposition or question. At this time he was only twenty-one years of age; and it quickly became manifest that the great qualities of the father had no counterpart in the son. Politian had bestowed unwearied pains on his education, and in some respects they had been successful. His person was fine and commanding, his elocution easy and graceful: he was an elegant classical scholar, a clever improvisatore poet, and had much showy talent. In manly exercises, and in bodily agility, he excelled most men. He was an admirable horseman and wrestler, and in the fashionable game of tennis few could compete with him. But his accomplishments were superficial. They dazzled the multitude, but filled him with insufferable

* Vide Bell on Anatomy of Expression, Essay 9.

vanity and presumption. He had nothing of his father's profound sagacity, sober caution, and wise moderation.* Headstrong, haughty, and arrogant, he was incapable of self-command; and the magistrates and functionaries, who had been used to receive, with deference, the law from Lorenzo's lips, often retired from the son's presence displeased and disgusted. Addicted to gross and sensual indulgences, he disliked all serious application to business, and committed the conduct of his affairs to unworthy favourites, who abused his confidence. When difficult points were submitted to his consideration, he was wont to make his will the law, little regardful of the opinions of those who from their experience and position were the most entitled to deference. These bad qualities procured him numberless enemies, and daily provoked comparisons between himself and his father, much to his disadvantage†; yet he professed a desire to tread in his steps, and affected to imitate his patronage of letters and of art. Michael Angelo was even invited to resume his apartment in the Medici

* Guicciardini, Hist., lib. i. p. 13.

† Lorenzo's sagacity, in spite of the flattering representations given by Politian of Piero, led him to prognosticate the consequences of his son's headstrong character. Guicciardini, lib. i. p. 136., records the following fact: "Il padre Lorenzo contemplando la sua natura si era spesso lamentato con gli amici più intimi, che l'imprudenza e l'arroganza del figliuolo partorirebbe la rovina della sua casa." See, also, Jacopo Pitti, Cron. lib. i. p. 31.

Palace, and his judgment was occasionally appealed to about the purchase of gems, intaglios, and articles of *vertù*. But the patronage of Piero was exercised with so little discrimination, that he showed much less interest in the works and the growing reputation of the youthful Buonarroti, than in the feats of a Spanish staffiere, who had won his heart by his agility, keeping side by side with his horse when it went at full stretch. This man was even admitted to his table. And as to his patronage of Michael Angelo, instead of employing his talents upon durable materials, he imposed upon him, during a severe winter, the fruitless labour of forming a colossal figure of snow. It is said to have borne upon it the impress of his genius; but how disgusting to such a mind must have been this ridiculous consumption of labour and invention.

Had the public beheld in Piero only occasional outbreaks of folly, his youth would readily have supplied an apology, but, as things of constant recurrence, they naturally excited general dissatisfaction. Nor could the prudent conduct and courteous demeanour of his two brothers, the Cardinal Giovanni (afterwards Leo X.), and of Giuliano (subsequently Duke of Nemours), allay the gathering resentment.

It had been the sage policy of Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici, while extending and deepening their authority, to preserve the tone, habits, and demeanour of citizens of Florence. Piero's vanity

led him to cast aside any such caution, and to assume much of the show and the style of royalty. In a joint embassy to the court of Rome from the states of Naples and Florence, Venice and Milan, he chiefly aspired to dazzle all eyes by his personal splendour, and by the rich liveries and dresses of his attendants. A close and friendly union had hitherto subsisted between the heads of the Florentine and Milanese states. This bond of concord was severed by his arrogance during this embassy. But the time was at hand when the political condition of Italy became fraught with difficulties which might have baffled even his father's sagacity, and which, in consequence of his imprudences, rendered him for the rest of his days a fugitive and an adventurer. So far back as the year 1262, Urban IV., in the plenitude of papal presumption, and in pursuance of a project, already formed by his predecessor Innocent IV., to wrest the crown of the two Sicilies from its rightful heirs of the house of Arragon, had offered it, as a fief of the Holy See, to Charles of Anjou, brother of St. Louis. The offer was made in the first instance to this pious monarch himself, in favour of either of his younger sons, but had been rejected by him in consequence of its obvious injustice. His brother, less scrupulous, gladly accepted it; and Italy was, in consequence, scourged by bloody wars for upwards of a century. The claim, such as it was, of the house of Anjou, was revived (again to deluge

Italy with blood) in the person of Charles VIII., successor of Louis XI. In the year 1494, he invaded Italy with a powerful army, in assertion of this claim. Italy, without union or concord among its states, was unprepared for resistance, and Piero de' Medici almost invited an invasion of the Tuscan states, in particular, by rashly declaring himself a partisan of the house of Arragon. Scarcely had he taken this step, than he saw his error, and sought to deprecate the displeasure of Charles by abject submission. Almost the first notice which reached Florence of the advance of the French, after their passage of the Alps, was the alarming intelligence that they had already passed the Tuscan frontier, and were marking their progress by devastation and pillage. Piero now set off for the French head-quarters, and, acting on his own responsibility, consented, as the price of Charles's favour and forbearance, to place the fortresses of Sarzana, Pietra-santa and Serezanello (keys of the Tuscan states) in the king's custody, and to surrender Pisa and Leghorn. The fortresses were accordingly given up, by his orders, to the French; after which he hastened to Florence, and arrived there on the evening of November 8th, 1494. He found it pervaded by a general panic, in consequence of his rash proceedings, and from the terror of a French invasion.

The friends on whose support he most relied were either alienated or irresolute; and the next

morning, on going to the Palazzo Vecchio, where the council of state was sitting, he found the gates closed and guarded, and Luca Corsini, one of the priors, was in waiting to forbid his entry. In this emergency he summoned to his aid Paolo Orsini, his brother-in-law, and the gendarmes whom he commanded; but the people, discovering his intentions, armed in force to support the council. In vain did the Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici and others of his partisans raise the rallying cry of his family, "*Palle, palle!*" nobody obeyed the summons. Every moment added to the popular ferment; and at length Piero and his brother Giuliano, hearing themselves proclaimed rebels, and the public toscin sounding for a levy en masse, sought their safety in flight*, and, guarded by a few of the gendarmes of Orsini, passed through one of the city gates, which was instantly closed upon them. The cardinal made his escape in the disguise of a Franciscan monk, and, overtaking his brothers in the Apennines, they all three pushed on for Bologna. Here they were received by Giovanni Bentivoglio, who was astonished to behold the heads of the house of Medici, fugitives and outcasts from Florence; and still more, to find they had become such, without any struggle to maintain their power. "Should you ever hear that Bentivoglio has been chased out of Bologna," he exclaimed, "like you out of Florence,

* Guicciardini, lib. i. p. 144.

believe it not. I would rather be cut to pieces by my enemies than thus yield to them." These words were uttered with no just prognostic of the future. This chieftain's daring under circumstances somewhat similar was so tested. He did succumb to his enemies, and passed the remainder of his days in exile.

By a decree of the Florentine council, Piero and his brothers had in the meantime been proclaimed rebels, and a price set upon their heads. All the families which had been exiled or degraded during the sixty years of the Medici dynasty were restored to their former privileges. The palaces of such of the leading functionaries as were deemed to be opposed to the popular will, were pillaged, and among others that of the Cardinal de' Medici. The Medici palace itself, now called Riccardi, built by Cosmo in the Via Larga, escaped for a time, in consequence of its being reserved for the reception of the French monarch; but upon his occupation of it, his troops or their officers ransacked its precious treasures, and after the king's departure what remained of them was sold by the state. In this way was dispersed the unique and magnificent collection of pictures, statues, gems, intaglios, cameos, and other exquisite objects of art, sought out and purchased at an enormous cost and with equal taste by Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici. The splendid library of manuscripts and books shared a similar fate. When fortune again smiled upon the family

some of the finest objects of art, and a great part of the manuscripts, were either recovered or repurchased.

Michael Angelo, anticipating the consequences of this storm while it was yet gathering, and fearing that he might be involved in the proscription of his patrons, had retired first to Bologna and soon after to Venice. Condivi mentions having often heard him relate a curious story of an alleged supernatural intimation of Piero's approaching fate to one Cardiere, an improvisatore poet, who had been patronised by Lorenzo. This man told him that an apparition of Lorenzo had appeared beside his bed, a night or two before, clad in a sable, tattered vestment, and had commanded him, in a stern tone of voice, to go to his son Piero, and tell him that he would ere long be driven from Florence, and must never expect to return. Michael Angelo added that he had urged him to lose no time in delivering the message, but that he had failed to do so, from want of courage. The artist and the poet soon after met again; and the former observing that Cardiere looked very sad, inquired the cause. He replied that, during the preceding night, Lorenzo had reappeared to him, habited as before; that he had awoke him with a blow on the ear, and had reproached him for not having conveyed the message to his son. Michael Angelo repeated his former advice; and accordingly Cardiere set off to Careggi, where Piero then was, to perform his mission. He met him on the road to

Florence, in his litter, and, stopping it, tremblingly told his story. Piero ridiculed both it and him; and his chancellor Bibbiena exclaimed, "You are a fool: had Lorenzo wished to communicate with his son, he would not have made use of you, but would have appeared to him himself." Cardiere, on his return, so worked on the superstition of Michael Angelo, that, under the apprehension of imminent danger, he hastened his departure.*

How much of Cardiere's story was founded on fact, and how much more of it was mere fancy and fear, it may be difficult to determine: doubtless,

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

But, before having recourse to the supernatural, let us, according to Horace's maxim, "Nec Deus intersit," &c., inquire how far the whole may be accounted for by natural causes. At this moment, many wiser heads than Cardiere's were prognosticating the probable fall of Piero from power. He might have derived his first impressions of this kind from public opinion; his excited feelings might soon shape them into a dream, which appeared a reality; and the conflict which ensued in his mind might

* This story closely accords with one related by Clarendon, in the early part of his history, of an apparition of old Sir George Villiers to a dependant of the family, commanding him to warn his son the Duke of Buckingham of his impending danger.

have stirred up, on the final occasion, a nightmare accompanied by a vivid renewal of the first dream, and by what seemed to him a box on the ear.

The want of ready money shortened Michael Angelo's stay at Venice, and he returned to Bologna, which he found in a state of much agitation in consequence of the presence of the heads of the Medici family, and of the unsettled condition of Italy. The city gates were in consequence strictly guarded, and an order had been published forbidding every one, on pain of a penalty of 50 livres, to go beyond the ramparts without a passport for readmission. One day, inadvertently, he infringed this regulation, and, being unable to pay the fine, was placed in custody. From this painful situation he was quickly liberated by the interposition of a gentleman of the name of Aldovrandi, one of the Council of Sixteen, who was so touched on witnessing his distress, that he generously paid the fine for him. Interested by his manners and intelligence, he followed up this kindness by inviting him to spend some days at his house, which he most gladly did, and when about to take leave, his friendly host would not hear of his departure.

During this brief space of time, acquaintance had grown into intimacy, and, step by step, the few days expanded into a twelvemonth, at the end of which Aldovrandi, who had now learnt to love his guest almost as a son, and to honour him as a youth of exalted genius, would gladly have detained him

still longer; but inclination and duty both prompted his return to Florence. Aldovrandi delighted in the native beauties of the Tuscan Muse, and found a corresponding taste in his guest, so that they spent much time in reading together the finest parts of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio, as well as in cultivating other branches of elegant literature. On these occasions, Michael Angelo was usually the reader, for his correct pronunciation (so highly cultivated under the roof of Lorenzo) charmed the ear of his friend, and imparted great effect to the beauties of their favourite authors. Nor was he, as an artist, wholly unemployed during his stay in Bologna. It so happened that the celebrated tomb of St. Dominic, in the Jesuits' church in Bologna, executed by Nicola Pisano, between two and three centuries before (A. D. 1230), still wanted two figures, that of a St. Petronius and an angel, to complete the original design. These, at the instigation of his friend Aldovrandi, he was commissioned to supply for the sum of thirty ducats. It would have been incongruous to have executed them in his own free and masterly style; he therefore judiciously adopted that of the monument. The Petronius is a well conceived figure; that of the angel is full of dignity and grace, and adds much to the interest of the composition. This tomb justly ranks among the most remarkable works of the Revival, and as such, it must have gratified Michael Angelo to study its merits and to supply what was still wanting

to its completion. The numerous bas-reliefs which adorn it (some of which were executed by Nicola's scholars from his designs) illustrate the acts of the life of St. Dominic,—a name which grates harshly on Protestant ears,—but, viewing them as works of art, they are full of spirit and expression.

In the principal compartment a knight is introduced as fallen from his horse, and as restored to life by the saint in the presence of his mourning and terrified friends. The pathos infused into this composition, and its fine grouping, have justly rendered it an object of special admiration; and considering the date of its execution it deserves to be regarded as a marvellous production.

There is no greater name in the annals of resuscitated Christian art than that of Nicola Pisano. He was one of the ablest architects of his time; but it is as a sculptor that he is to be referred to with enthusiasm. He found his art far behind the two sister ones in all the qualities which address the mind and the imagination. Witness the grotesque barbaric forms of Lombard, and the stiff, starch, figures "staring wide with stony eyes," of Byzantine art, from which he had to choose his models. He left behind him a school, founded upon principles, the full development of which has produced all that is most beautiful, dignified, and graceful in modern sculpture. His works exemplify the truth of nature, heightened by poetic invention, refined taste, and vigorous execution. As such he deserves to be

Drawn by J. S. Hartford, Esq^re from an Etching

TOMB OF COUNTESS BEATRICE.

CAMPO SANTO — PISA

regarded as the precursor of Duccio, Cimabue, and Giotto, each of whom, there is reason to believe, profited by his genius and example. Duccio, in particular, has closely imitated him in the adjustment of his groups, in the folds of his draperies, and in the picturesque conception of his subjects.

It is interesting to know that, in thus taking the lead in emancipating art from barbarism, he was himself primarily indebted to the influence of a monument of Grecian sculpture, which almost fortuitously attracted his attention. The fleets of Pisa, in their visits to the coast of Greece, had brought away various specimens of her sculpture, among which was a sarcophagus enriched with figures,—we will not say of the purest and best period of art, but still of a masterly epoch. The subject, according to Vasari, is that of Meleager; but it has since been more justly denominated that of Phædra and Hippolytus. The frontispiece is divided into two compartments: the one contains an elegant female figure seated, with a child by her side, together with attendants; the other exhibits a departure for the chase, with three fine horses in the background. This sarcophagus had long lain neglected on the outside of the cathedral of Pisa, but was at length brought into notice from being selected for the tomb of the Countess Beatrice, mother of the celebrated Matilda Countess of Tuscany. At a later period it was removed into the Campo Santo of Pisa, where it is still to be seen in excellent preservation.

This monument attracted, and at length absorbed the attention of Nicola Pisano; and as the statue of the Egyptian Memnon is fabled to have put forth strains of melody so soon as the rays of the orient sun lighted on it, thus Nicola responded to the magic influence of the genius of Greece, in a strain not vocal it is true, but not less harmonious. From the moment that he fully entered into the spirit of this classical trophy, he regarded with disdain the uncouth models amidst which he had been educated, and became emulous of realising in his own productions what he so much admired in the work before him. Hence he formed a style of design the leading characteristics of which are rich picturesque invention, powerful and dramatic expression, draperies, attitudes, and grouping varied and graceful, and a style of drawing founded on a successful study of the antique, combined with that of nature. With these qualities he united much of that devout sentiment which is so strongly imprinted on the early schools of Italian painting.

The finest of his works is to be found where one would most wish to find it,—in his native city, and not far from the sarcophagus to the study of which he owed his greatness. We allude to the magnificent pulpit executed by him for the baptistery of Pisa, where it exists in the highest preservation.*

* Rosini, the historian of Italian art, thus expresses himself respecting Nicola's pulpit: he calls it, "Un vero portento dell'

ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

DRAWN BY J.S. HARFORD ESQ^R FROM THE PULPIT BY N. PISANO IN THE BAPTISTERY OF PISA.

In its form it is hexagonal; six Corinthian columns support it; and five of its compartments are enriched with bas-reliefs of surpassing beauty and interest. The subjects are the Nativity,—the Adoration of the Magi,—the Presentation in the Temple,—the Crucifixion,—and the Last Judgment. This last, though the least successful of the five, attests the spirited efforts of Nicola to delineate the nude, and to catch the inspiration of the antique models. The Adoration of the Magi is one of the finest of the compartments. In this charming composition the seated female figure on the sarcophagus became to him the model for a graceful conception of the Virgin Mary; and the attitudes, contours, and draperies of this and of the accompanying figures, are such as almost to anticipate some of the best qualities of art in the time of Ghiberti. Three horses are introduced in the background, evidently studied from the sarcophagus, and rivalling them in spirit. The drawing, it is true, throughout these bas-reliefs, while it aims thus high, betrays not a little of the imperfection of early art, and the heads in particular are somewhat too large for the figures to which they belong.

The pulpit of the cathedral of Siena is a still

arte: ci si farà manifesto, che a lui sopra tutti i contemporanei e successori immediate debbesi il vanto di restauratore dell' arte."

"It is evident," said Rosini to me, in reference to the compositions of Duccio in the cathedral of Siena, "that he had closely studied and worked from Nicola's pulpit at Pisa."

more elaborate production. There is a close relation between the subjects of both, but the compositions are more crowded in that of Siena, and the execution is inferior, the result probably of his having committed it in many parts to his pupils.

D'Agincourt gives good reasons for supposing that the great Arnolfo di Lapo was Nicola's pupil both in sculpture and architecture, as also for concluding that, although he derived, himself, his first impulse in art from studying the sarcophagus at Pisa, he perfected his study of the antique at Rome and elsewhere.*

The school of this great artist was carried on after his death, with eminent success, by his son Giovanni, and his pupil Andrea Pisano. The elaborate basreliefs which adorn the façade of the cathedral of Orvieto attest Giovanni's wonderful power of delineating the passions and feelings of the human mind. The subjects embrace leading events both of the Old and New Testaments, ending with the *Last Judgment.* Giovanni was assisted in the vast labour of this work by Arnolfo, and other able scholars of his father Nicola. Vasari and others have stated that Nicola himself worked upon them, whereas his death took place fifteen years before the foundation of the cathedral.†

* D'Agincourt, Italian edition in folio, vol. i. p. 344., Venezia, 1813.

† Giovanni's sculptures at Orvieto have been engraved with

Andrea Pisano was the friend and coadjutor of Arnolfo di Lapo, and of Giotto, and executed under them some of the finest sculptures which decorate the cathedral at Florence. To him also we owe the most ancient of the three bronze gates of its baptistery. According to Vasari his own taste and talent were aided by those of Giotto in the figures and compositions which adorn it.

Andrea Orcagna, whose marble shrine in Or-San-Michele at Florence, richly adorned with sculpture, forms one of the finest gems of art in the fourteenth century, was a pupil of Andrea Pisano.

The art of sculpture, throughout the ensuing century, progressed but little beyond the point at which it was left by Nicola Pisano in 1241. Ghiberti then arose in his majesty and strength, and left far behind him all his predecessors. The bronze portals of the baptistery at Florence, which bear upon them his finest productions, were pronounced by Michael Angelo to be worthy of forming the gates of Paradise. The bas-reliefs which adorn them are replete with poetic grace, brilliant fancy, and masterly execution, whilst a spirit of devout elevation breathes and burns throughout the whole range of their compositions. They have acted powerfully not only upon sculpture but also upon painting; and even Raphael made them his study, and bor-

the utmost fidelity and talent by Mr. L. Gruner, an artist of the highest merit.

rowed from them many bright ideas. What Raphael was to Giotto, Ghiberti was to Nicola Pisano. The same creative and elevated sentiment reigns throughout their works: the essential difference between them is a consequence of the perfection as compared with the infancy of art. Among the competitors for constructing the gates of the baptistery, it is interesting to find the great names of Donatello and Brunelleschi. Thence the transition to Michael Angelo is easy and natural.

It is thus that we may trace a golden thread of connection between Nicola Pisano and all that is greatest in modern sculpture.

CHAPTER VIII.

PART FIRST.

RETURN OF MICHAEL ANGELO TO FLORENCE. — FINDS IT IN A STATE OF GREAT POLITICAL EXCITEMENT. — POPULAR GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED THERE BENEATH THE AUSPICES OF SAVONAROLA. — MICHAEL ANGELO'S ESTEEM FOR HIM, AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY MAN. — HIS EARLY PREFERENCE FOR THE MONASTIC LIFE. — ENTERS A CONVENT OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER AT BOLOGNA. — HIS FAILURE AT FIRST AS A PREACHER, AND HIS SUBSEQUENT SUCCESS. — CLAIMS PROPHETIC POWERS. — SETTLES AT FLORENCE, AND BECOMES PRIOR OF THE CONVENT OF SAN MARCO. — HIS ZEAL AND SUCCESS AS A PREACHER, AND GREAT INFLUENCE. — HIS REFORMS. — HE REJECTS THE ADVANCES OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI, AND WHY. — DENOUNCES THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE AGE. — A BRIEF VIEW OF THOSE CORRUPTIONS. — LAST ILLNESS OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI. — HE SENDS FOR SAVONAROLA. — THE REVOLUTION WHICH FOLLOWED HIS DEATH. — SAVONAROLA IS CALLED UPON TO ACT AS AN ENVOY TO CHARLES VIII., AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO REMODEL THE FLORENTINE REPUBLIC. — HIS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SCHEMES AND PROCEEDINGS.

1494–5.

It may readily be conceived with what grateful feelings Michael Angelo quitted the hospitable mansion which had so long afforded him a happy asylum, and what regrets his departure must have

caused to his kind host, and to his Bolognese friends. He found Florence, on his return, fiercely agitated by conflicting opinions, both civil and religious. The events which led to the expulsion of the Medici, and to the establishment of constitutional government there, have already been narrated. The adherents of the exiled family were still numerous and powerful, and party-feeling ran high between them and their opponents. Michael Angelo, to a considerable degree, stood aloof from both. He looked on with very mingled feelings, arising out of affectionate and devoted gratitude to the house of Medici, and of secret sympathy with those of his fellow-citizens who were nobly struggling for the permanent restoration of the ancient republic. Among these was to be found one of the most remarkable characters in the annals of modern history. We allude to the celebrated Savonarola, a great master of sacred oratory, and who was now placed by peculiar circumstances in a situation of political pre-eminence, which rendered him, for a time, arbiter of the destinies of Florence. Vasari and Condivi both assure us that Michael Angelo regarded him with affectionate veneration,—that he delighted to recur to the fine tones of his voice in preaching,—and that, in his declining years, the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of Savonarola, were his favourite study.*

* "Dilettòsi molto della Scrittura sacra, come ottimo cristiano, che egli era, ed ebbe in gran venerazione l' opere scritte

As he finally devoted himself to the same patriotic cause which now engaged all the energies of Savonarola, whose history, for the five ensuing years, was the history of Florence itself, we think that we shall further the ends of our biography, and consult the wishes of our readers, if we relate, at some length, the particulars of his eventful career.

Savonarola was born at Ferrara, on the 21st of September, 1452. His family, originally of Padua, was of noble extraction. Destined by his father for the medical profession, he had all the advantages of a learned education, and gave early proofs of an acute intellect, by the pertinent questions which he often put to his teachers, and by the facility with which he mastered the dialectic subtleties of the scholastic philosophy.*

The petty sovereigns and heads of the various small states of Italy, in the fifteenth century, vied with each other in the patronage of learning and

da frà Girolamo Savonarola, per avere udita la voce di quel frate in pergamo." — *Vasari*, p. 131. 4to. Roma.

" Ha con grande studio ed attenzione lette le sacre Scritture, si del Testamento vecchio, come del nuovo, e chi sopra di ciò s' è affaticato, come gli scritti del Savonarola, al quale egli ha sempre avuta grande affezione, restandogli ancor nella mente la memoria della sua viva voce."— *Condivi*, p. 79.

" Il Michelangiolo si ricordava ne' suoi tardi anni delle parole del povero frate," says the editor of a volume of his works printed in Florence in 1845.

* Picus Mirandulæ Princeps, Vita Savonarolæ, with additions by Quétif, Paris, 1574, tom. i. p. 9. Burlamachi, Vita Sav.

learned men; and the court of Ferrara in particular, under the auspices of its first Duke Hercules, was a centre of literary attraction and festive gaiety. Assemblies and days of reception at court were frequent; and the principal families of Ferrara, mingling with the crowd of distinguished strangers, shared on these occasions with them in the duke's attentions.

Savonarola, it is said, was never seen but at one of these parties.* His tastes, even in childhood were devotional; and while pursuing his philosophical studies, he gave many indications of a preference for that of theology beyond all others. He delighted also in poetry, and some of his earliest compositions were poetic. One of these, written at the age of twenty, and entitled "De Ruinâ Mundi," expatiates at considerable length, and in verse more remarkable for its vigour than its harmony, upon the vices of the age, and the corruptions of the Church.

When the time arrived for choosing a profession, he felt an unconquerable aversion from that of medicine, and was ardently desirous of embracing the monastic life.

In this state of mind he reached the age of twenty-three years, and was only withheld from a frank avowal of his wishes by the fear of their being frustrated through the entreaties and persuasions of

* Burlamachi, Vita Sav. p. 30. Pici Mir. Vit. Sav. p. 10.

his friends, who he knew would oppose them. At length he cut short the conflict, by secretly quitting the paternal roof, and uniting himself with a Dominican fraternity at Bologna, leaving behind him a written paper explanatory of his motives. Thence he addressed an apologetic letter to his parents (dated April, 1475), in which he tells them, that the profligate condition of society throughout Italy rendered it impossible for him, so long as he lived in the midst of the world, to carry out his own views of Christian duty, and had therefore almost forced this step upon him. His letter, though expressive of much pain for the grief he had caused his friends, manifests unalterable resolution in his new course.

Within monastic walls he expected to find himself living among human angels; he was therefore shocked to observe ambition and selfishness little less actively at work beneath monkish hoods than in the busy haunts of men. He had long been desirous of devoting himself, in retirement, to a profound study of the Sacred Oracles; he thought the time for this was now come; but soon found that within these walls such studies were lightly esteemed, and that the dogmas of Aristotle were made of greater account than the precepts and example of Jesus Christ.* Instead of being encouraged in his higher aspirations, he was obliged,

* Burlamachi, Vita di Sav. p. 31.

in obedience to his superiors, to consume much of his time in preparing and delivering lectures on the belles lettres and on metaphysics.* He obeyed with a heavy heart; and years rolled away† before he was released from this bondage, and allowed, in pursuance of his original purpose, to make the Holy Scriptures his principal study. He also found much pleasure in perusing the works of Aquinas.

On entering the monastery, he had formed no settled purpose of exercising the office of a preacher, but, after a time, the advice of his superiors, and his own wishes, equally inclined him to it.

His first appearance at Florence, as a preacher, was in the year 1483, in the church of San Lorenzo, but with little success, in consequence of a want of address, and from a natural difficulty of articulation, which had operated to his disadvantagn as a lecturer. After repeated trials, he returned to Bologna, humbled, mortified, and discouraged; yet not so cast down as to relinquish his object. For a twelvemonth he laboured, in the spirit of the great orator of Greece, to overcome this infirmity; and so successfully, that being appointed, in the course of 1486, to preach at Brescia, scarcely a vestige of it was apparent.

* He found, says Burlamachi, the monks of his time disposed "occuparsi in moltissime vanità, massime studiando più Aristotile che la Santa Scrittura," &c. — *Burlamachi, Vit. Sav.* p. 35.

† Pici Mir. Vit. Sav. p. 14.

On this occasion he addressed his auditory from the Apocalypse, and electrified them by the burning words in which he denounced the reigning corruptions of the Church and of the world. From this time he preached with the zeal of a Reformer; his language, his imagery, and his denunciations, were in the spirit and in the words of the ancient prophets; and he scrupled not to point to Rome as the mystic Babylon, and mother of abominations. He glanced at the voluptuousness of the popes, at the flagitious profligacy of their lives, and at the simoniacal arts by which they grasped at the popedom; as also at the immorality of cardinals and bishops *, and at the similar arts by which they won their way to ecclesiastical honours. He denounced the impurities of the cloister, and the general absence of discipline in the Church. He depicted in strong colours the tyranny and vices of

* "Inter omnes vero ejus persequutores, hi acerrimi inventi sunt qui moribus pessimis, et potissimum ecclesiæ præsides quorum vita fœdissima universum orbem fœtore repleverat; illorum luxus simoniacasque labes insectabatur publicè privatimque monere solitus, a Babilone (Romam intelligens) fugiendum esse," &c. — *Picus, Vit. Sav.* cap. 9.

"Pontifices summo astu et dolo, necnon simoniacâ perfidiâ supremum auspicari sacerdotium dicebantur palam, sic ut nec quisquam id ferè revocaret in dubium. Mox adepti solium, scortis et cynædis eos, auroque conservando vacare, fama publica circumferebat, atque ad eorum exemplum qui suberant cardinales et episcopi sese instituere. Nulla in eis vel modicus Dei cultus, iis eadem vivendi ratio, nullaque religio." —*Picus, Vit. Sav.* cap. 5. Burlamachi, p. 39.

princes, and the corruption of manners throughout the inferior classes; and he grounded upon these facts a stirring call to repentance and reformation.

For the ensuing four years, though he occasionally appeared in the pulpit in various parts of Northern Italy, his time was chiefly devoted to theological study, and to further preparation for the ministry. In the year 1487, he preached at a provincial chapter of the Dominicans of Lombardy at Reggio, and among his hearers was the celebrated Giovanni Pico, Prince of Mirandula, who was so smitten by his eloquence, that he felt anxious it should find scope on a more public theatre. He therefore wrote to this effect to Lorenzo de' Medici, who, in consequence (according to Burlamachi), encouraged Savonarola to settle at Florence. Yet as two or three years elapsed before he did so, we cannot but think, with M. Perrens, that some subsequent cause led him thither. On his arrival, A. D. 1490, he united himself to the Dominican convent of San Marco, a grand conventual establishment, which, if not founded, had been liberally endowed by Cosmo de' Medici, and possessed a fine library.

His first employment was that of a reader; his next the instruction of the novices; and his addresses to them were felt to be so full of interest, that they were soon attended by most of the members of the convent. At length he preached in

the garden of the convent, on the edge of a parterre of roses, to increasing auditories.

His profound learning, and his brilliant talent as a preacher, in unison with great simplicity of manners, procured him general esteem; and upon the death of the prior, in 1491, he was appointed his successor, and thus found himself unexpectedly placed in a position of equal honour, credit, and usefulness. His zeal, labours, and eloquence, quickly attracted general notice. Those who had witnessed, some years before, his first attempts in sacred oratory at Florence, could scarcely be persuaded that the great and impassioned preacher who now addressed them could be the same man.*

The church of San Marco quickly became incapable of accommodating the increasing crowd of auditors; that of the Annunciata, and, soon after, the spacious cathedral, were opened to him; but even these proved insufficient. Not only Florence poured forth a vast tide of hearers; they flocked in also from the neighbouring villages; and when the area of the church in which he preached became full, later comers would climb up wherever it was possible, in order to see and hear the great preacher.

After the Medici dynasty had become established in Florence, it had been customary for the prior of San Marco, when he had entered on his office, to

* Burlamachi, p. 39. Perrens, Vie de Sav. vol. i. p. 33. Picus, Vita Sav. cap. 7.

wait upon the head of that family, and do homage to him. Upon being apprised by some of the leading members of the convent that such was the custom, he declined compliance. In this refusal we already trace the workings of that political alienation from the existing government which prepared him at a later period to become the life and soul of the popular party in Florence. "Do I owe this appointment," was his question, "to God or to Lorenzo de' Medici?" "To God, undoubtedly," was the reply. "Suffer me, then," he rejoined, "to pay my homage to God, and not to a man."

In the mean time his popularity and influence daily gathered strength.

Many of the tradesmen forbore to open their shops* till after the morning preaching was over, and not a few of them were in the habit of exercising hospitality to such of the peasants as had come in from a great distance and needed refreshment. Even during the rigours of winter the area in front of San Marco was thronged, long before the doors were opened, by a multitude of devotees anxious to obtain the best places.† The people hung upon his lips with intense interest, for he addressed them with a fervour, an affection, and a fidelity which they had never before witnessed, and which deeply touched their consciences and their hearts. An

* Burlamachi, Vit. Sav. pp. 88. and 93. Picus, p. 32.
† Sismondi, Hist. Ital. vol. xii. p. 72.

SAVONAROLA.

BORN 1452.—DIED 1498.

increased attention to the duties of religion, and a remarkable reformation of life and manners, gradually became the visible consequences of Savonarola's preaching.

The reforms thus wrought, were, however, scorned and ridiculed in many quarters, especially among the younger branches of the nobility, who denounced the holy monk as a harsh disciplinarian and a flighty enthusiast. Even some of the monks of his convent complained of the strictness with which the prior enforced the ascetic and severe rules of their order; but as he required nothing from them which he did not rigidly practise himself, their murmurs were little heeded. Equally indifferent to the voice of censure or of praise, he stedfastly pursued what he conceived to be the path of Christian duty. While he exposed the vices of society, he was kind in his demeanour to all: his great object appeared to be to do good, and to convert souls; and he was not only indefatigable as a preacher, but actively promoted the relief of the poor, and the Christian education of the young. These practical virtues won for him the love of his auditors as much as his eloquence their admiration; and at length Lorenzo de' Medici felt it important to secure his good will and support to his government. Honours and preferment would, no doubt, have rewarded his subserviency; but these he sought not; and being jealous of his independence, he shunned rather than

courted the advances of that illustrious man. After attending mass at San Marco, as Lorenzo now and then did, he would walk in the convent garden; and it was known among the fraternity that he would have been well pleased had the prior sometimes joined him in his walk, and thus have given him opportunities of winning his regard. Burlamachi * mentions an occasion on which a monk in the interest of Lorenzo went to apprise the prior that the Magnifico was walking in the garden. "Has he asked for me?" was his reply. "No, father," said the monk. "Let him then pursue his devotions undisturbed," rejoined he, and remained tranquil in his cell. "This man is a true monk," said Lorenzo, "and the only one I have known who acts up to his profession." Lorenzo, among other advances, sometimes put into the poor-box of the convent a large sum in golden crowns. Upon opening the box, the prior separated them from the silver, and observed, "The silver is enough for our wants; take the golden ducats to the good brothers of San Martino, for distribution among the poor."

In the mean time Savonarola continued to preach with all boldness, and occasionally lashed the vices of the Roman court, and alluded to those of its head in so pointed a way, that Lorenzo, fearful of the consequences, deemed it needful to interfere,

* Burlam. p. 43.

and deputed five citizens of the highest rank, credit, and character, to wait on the prior, and try to persuade him to act more discreetly, and to consult the common good and peace of the city. Among the citizens deputed were Antonio Soderini, Francesco Valori, and Lorenzo's near relative Bernardo Rucellai.* They called on him professedly of their own accord.

He listened to their remonstrances with calm attention, and then expressed his conviction that their visit was not spontaneous, but imposed upon them by Lorenzo. "Tell him," he said, "that he is a Florentine and the head of the republic, whereas I am only a stranger and a poor monk; but entreat him, in my name, to repent of his errors, for calamities from on high impend over him and his family." †

Though all the advances of Lorenzo had failed of success, he appears to have conducted himself, under the disappointment, with singular magnanimity, for we find Savonarola appointed to preach the course of Lent sermons, in the year 1492, at the church of San Lorenzo.‡

The conviction that his vocation from God was that of a reformer and a prophet, was so present to Savonarola's mind, that his zeal often mastered

* Vita Sav. Pici Mir. p. 22.; and Burlamachi, p. 48.

† This version of S.'s reply is made up of the joint statements of Burlamachi, p. 49., and Pico di Mir. cap. 6.

‡ Perrens, vol. i. p. 58.

his prudence, and he would pour forth his soul with the fervour and authority of an inspired teacher, depicturing in energetic words, and in highly figurative language, the awful judgments which, as he conceived, were about to be inflicted by Divine Justice upon Italy, and upon Rome in particular. In order to elucidate his motives, it may be well to dwell briefly upon what was then passing in the Romish Church, and also to take a rapid retrospective glance at its condition during much of the fourteenth and the whole of the fifteenth centuries.

The transfer of the papal throne from Rome to Avignon, for a space of seventy years during the early part of the fourteenth century, entailed enormous evils on Europe, and on the States of the Church in particular. It was a deliberate renunciation by the popes of their most sacred duties as bishops of Rome and as temporal sovereigns. While they passed their days in Epicurean ease and luxury on the banks of the Rhone, the patrimony of the Church was trodden down by lawless barons and contending factions, and, as was natural in such a state of things, the people, both clerical and lay, equally despised the laws of God and of man. Venality, impurity, and licentiousness pervaded the papal court, and had reached such a pitch at the time that Petrarch was a resident at or near Avignon, that he points to the Romish court there, in his Epistles *sine titulo*, and

in three of his Sonnets, as the Western Babylon, a sink of iniquity, a very hell upon earth. Matteo Villani, a contemporary chronicler*, confirms Petrarch's descriptions, especially with reference to the pontificate of Clement VI., whose court appears to have surpassed even that of our Charles II. in open profligacy. Some translated extracts from these Letters of Petrarch are given below †, and various passages from the originals will be found in fuller detail in the Appendix.

* Cronica de Matteo Villani, lib. iii. cap. 13., edit. Milan, 183.

† "This Babylon, situated on the banks of the Rhone, is the enemy of the good, and the asylum of the wicked—an asylum for the worst of evils:—famous, shall I call her, or the infamous harlot, who hath committed fornication with the kings of the earth? Thou art, in truth, the very same whom the Evangelist beheld seated on many waters, arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. Thou hast in thy hands a golden cup, full of abominations and filthiness of thy fornications. Dost thou recognise thyself, Babylon? If thou dissemblest, hear what follows: 'And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' Why art thou silent? prove that any other but thyself is thus drunken, or at least say if thou canst deny thyself to be this drunken one. Mark what follows: 'Hear a voice from heaven saying, Come out from her, my people, lest ye partake of her sins and of her plagues.'" —Rev. xvii. xviii.

"Such," Petrarch adds, "is the modern Babylon. Whatever of perfidy or fraud, whatever of cruelty and pride, whatever of impurity and unbridled licentiousness you may have heard or read of, whatever of impiety and of the vilest manners the world has elsewhere witnessed, you will behold all such evils

Then followed the great Western schism, which displayed to Europe the appalling spectacle, during

accumulated in fullest measure here." Again, "Here, in Babylon, all that is good expires. In this kingdom of avarice, nothing is deemed a loss excepting the loss of money. What is told us of hell is treated as fabulous: the resurrection of the body, the end of the world, the coming of Christ to judgment, are esteemed fables. Here truth is deemed folly, abstinence rusticity, chastity a signal reproach, licence in sin magnanimity and praiseworthy freedom." — *Opera Petrarchæ*, 2 vols. folio, vol. i. Epist. 15, 16. pp. 807. 803. 806. Basil, 1554.

A bitter sarcasm was played off upon Clement VI. and his cardinals about this time, the credit of which is given, by some, to John Visconti, Archbishop of Milan; by others, and with greater probability, to Petrarch. The pope had been holding a consistory, and one of the cardinals contrived adroitly to let fall, without being seen, a paper, which was picked up and carried to Clement, and read in his presence. It was a letter with this prefix: "The Prince of Darkness, to Pope Clement his vicar, and the cardinals his faithful counsellors and good friends." At the end was written, "Given out in the centre of hell, amidst a crowd of demons."

The letter contained an enumeration of all the crimes which the prince of darkness conceived the prelates had been guilty of, with respect to which he paid them great compliments, exhorting them to go on thus, so as to win more and more of his favour. He then attacked the doctrine of the apostles, and ridiculed their poor and frugal mode of living. "I well know," he added, "that far from imitating all this, you hold it in detestation: on this point, therefore, I have no cause to reproach you. But your language does not always correspond with your actions; correct yourselves in this particular, in case you wish for preferment in my kingdom." He ended by saying "Pride, your mother, salutes you, and so also do your sisters Avarice, Uncleanness, &c., who are making daily progress under your

the space of twenty-five years, of two or more contending popes, anathematising each other, scourging Italy, by their fierce contentions, with anarchy and blood, — rivals for the triple crown, and rivals no less in perfidy and crime.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century the sentiments of deference and consideration, hitherto habitually accorded to the princes and prelates of the Church, were converted, by events like these, into contempt and hatred; and the cry for reform, raised at first by Wicliffe in England, and echoed in deep tones from amidst the distant regions of Bohemia and Moravia, was no less taken up in various parts of Germany.

The Church, and the Western world over which it presided, were hastening on towards a crisis of general anarchy*, when John XXIII., one of three contending popes, yielded to the earnest entreaties of the Emperor Sigismund, and con-

auspices." — See *De Sade, Vie de Pétrarque,* liv. iv. p. 174.; and also *Villani, Cron.* lib. ii. p. 48.

Mr. Hallam in his "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 337., touches in forcible terms on the rapacity and licence of the Avignon popes, and justly doubts whether even the avarice of John XXII. reflected greater dishonour on the Church, than the licentious profuseness of Clement VI. Petrarch uses language which we shall not repeat, upon the personal vices of those popes.

See also Sismondi, Hist. Ital. vol. vii. pp. 3—7.

* L'Enfant, Hist. of the Council of Constance, 4to. London, vol. i. pp. 437. and 445. Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. vol. iii. p. 410.

voked, in the year 1414, a general council of the Church to meet at Constance; its professed objects being the termination of the Western schism and the reform of the Church. The first of these objects it did effect; but though the preachers who addressed the council exposed the practical corruptions of the Church with unsparing fidelity, reform was cast to the winds. Yet the assembled clergy, however willing to deal thus gently with their own sins, were fierce and implacable prosecutors of alleged heretics in the persons of John Huss and Jerom of Prague, who were successively arraigned as such, and condemned to the flames. These men were, in fact, devout Roman Catholics, whose real guilt, in the eye of their persecutors, consisted in the boldness with which they had exposed the condition of the Church, and the evils resulting from papal despotism. They shine forth by their superior learning, wisdom, and piety, like stars in this age of moral and religious darkness.*

The pontificate of Nicholas V. the amiable and enlightened protector of learning and art, and that of Martin V., form for brief periods pleasing contrasts to the revolting scenes to which we have thus adverted; but succeeding popes more or less fell back into the old system, till at length our attention is fixed on Sixtus IV., A. D. 1473, and on

* L'Enfant, vol. ii. p. 136. Weismanni Hist. Eccles. vol. i. p. 1235, &c.

his successors Innocent VIII. and Alexander VI., under whom the youth and manhood of Savonarola were passed. It was thus from reflection upon the condition of the Church both past and present, that he imbibed his unquenchable zeal in the cause of reform. What was called religion had in fact become so separated from morality, that no surprise was felt at hearing of the most atrocious crimes perpe trated by persons in high places, whether lay or clerical; and the reflex crimes enacted upon themselves in return excited no astonishment. The dictates of truth and justice, when opposed to self-interest, were unblushingly violated; and Machiavelli, in noticing the fact, adds that men had come to the pass of accounting it no shame to plot schemes of perfidy, but shame only to fail in their accomplishment.

Sixtus IV. attained the popedom by perfidious and simoniacal arts. The conspiracy of the Pazzi, the object of which was the assassination of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, was concocted under his auspices, his principal auxiliaries in it, besides Francesco dei Pazzi himself, being a cardinal and an archbishop.

The foulest personal crimes are ascribed to this pontiff, with the mention of which we shall not sully our pages.*

* Machiavelli, lib. viii. Ist. Fior. p. 210., asserts in the most positive terms the participation of Sixtus in this plot. Sismondi, chap. lxxxviii. p. 237.

As to Innocent VIII., though he did not rival his predecessor in dark and daring criminality, he was a gay, unprincipled voluptuary*; weak, irresolute, the slave of favourites, the vicious head of a vicious court, grasping at wealth by simony and every species of peculation.

Beneath his sway the worst of crimes were pardoned upon the payment of certain fixed sums; and it was only because he could not in common decency avoid it, that he renewed, in the year 1488, a constitution of Pius II.†, passed A. D. 1473, forbidding priests to keep taverns, playhouses, and houses of ill-fame, or to act as the secret agents of courtezans. Many natural children had been born to him by various mothers, and he scrupled not publicly to recognise them as his offspring, and to load them with the spoils and honours of the Church. The grossest simony and the sale of Indulgences were practised in open day, under his sanction. By acts and arts like these he had won the papal tiara, and had then trampled on the promises made to the cardinals who had promoted his elevation. And yet Lorenzo de' Medici, about the time Savonarola first settled in Florence, prompted by personal and political ambition, had so stooped from his own high position as to contract an alliance with this pope by giving his daughter Madalena in marriage

* Guicciardini describes him as "voltato totalmente l' animo ad oziosi diletti."—Lib. x.

† Sismondi, Hist. d' Ital. chap. xc. p. 330.

to one of his natural sons. The easy pope, in return, bestowed a cardinal's hat on his son John, afterwards Leo X., then a boy only thirteen years old, coupled solely with the condition that he was not to act or vote in the consistory till he attained the age of sixteen.

In such a state of the Church, and of the world, who can be surprised if a spirit like Savonarola's felt it at times impossible to keep strictly within the limits of human prudence? "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" well expresses the working of his fervent feelings.

He and Lorenzo, though feeling much mutual respect, were continually crossing each other's paths. His schemes of reform, amidst much that was excellent, partook largely of monkish rigidity; and Lorenzo very naturally regarded them as suited only to the cloister. "Yet one cannot but admire," says Rio, "the contest, so lively, so dramatic, and so imposing, carried on by a simple monk against the spirit of the age, in face of all Italy. His object was to re-establish the kingdom of Christ in the heart, in the spirit, and in the imagination of mankind, and to extend the benefits of his redemption to all the human faculties, and to all their productions." * Lorenzo, on the other hand, was daily planning fresh schemes for the pleasure and amusement of the people at Florence, impelled thereto by an amiable desire to promote their gratification, as

* Rio, Poësie Chrétienne, cap. 8.

also by a wily wish to turn their thoughts from politics, so as to leave him at liberty to carry out his projects of personal aggrandisement. Popularity was one of the chief instruments by which he hoped to effect his object, and with this end in view, he exercised the art of becoming all things to all men with wonderful tact and ingenuity.

According as the occasion called for it, he could eloquently descant on Plato's views of Divine Love, with such men as Pico di Mirandula and Marsiglio Ficino; or contend with Argiropolo on the doctrines of Aristotle, or with Politian upon the point of a Greek epigram; or win the admiration of men of contemplative taste (such as Girolamo Benivieni) by his spiritual songs, or by the lofty flights of his philosophic muse; while for a Matteo Franco, and others of a comic stamp, he was always ready for an encounter of brilliant wit and smart repartee.*

The fêtes and the festivals with which he thus charmed the people, and averted their thoughts from his own political designs, were of the most exciting description.

Such amusements, with burlesque accompaniments, had long been common in Florence; but he multiplied their number, and heightened their effect by scenical devices and mythological figures

* Di P. Vincenzo Marchese. Memoir of Savonarola, embodied in the preliminary dissertation to the works of Fra Angelico di Fiesole, lib. ii. p. 107.

and emblems, got up with equal taste and cost. On these occasions he often became himself a prominent actor, mingling in the processions and dances, and encouraging every species of sport and merriment. His muse also then descended with ease from the sublime of Plato to the ribaldry of Aristophanes, and clothed licentious and Bacchanalian sentiments in gay and easy language, adapted to the level of the populace. Such is the direct tendency of his Canti Carnaleschi *, which were sung in chorus on these festive occasions, and of which Ginguené, the elegant historian of Italian literature, has justly remarked, that they imply a state of public manners, if not really worse than those of after-times, at least more openly licentious. The parties that he headed at these festivals issued forth at twilight in pompous procession, about five hundred in number, singing to the joyous sound of musical instruments the ballads and songs above referred to, the populace taking part in the chorus. To what species of licence these songs stirred up the excited multitude may be best judged of from the specimens we have given in the Appendix, No. 3.

When the shades of night set in, four hundred torch-bearers joined the procession, which ceased not to make its rounds throughout the city till a late hour of the ensuing morning; thus reviving

* Maffei, Storia dell. Let. Ital. lib. ii. cap. 2.

something very like the Bacchanalian orgies of Paganism.

Lorenzo's aim, to win over the populace to his interest by these means, proved eminently successful. A numerous association of the young men of Florence of all grades was formed, who were always ready to meet if summoned, armed or unarmed as the occasion might be, to support his interests and those of his family. They were called Campagnacci, and the pass-word of the party was "palle, palle;" in allusion to the well-known balls in the Medici coat of arms. Meanwhile the partizans of the old republic regarded these proceedings with jealousy and indignation. Among them were many of the most grave, influential citizens, such, for example, as Piero Capponi, Farinata degli Uberti, Jacopo Nardi the historian, Francesco Valori, called the Florentine Cato, and, above all, Savonarola.

The third year of Savonarola's residence at Florence (1492) was marked by the death of Innocent VIII., and of Lorenzo de' Medici. Lorenzo was cut off at the early age of forty-seven by an insidious fever, which in a short time so reduced his strength that his recovery became hopeless. Politian has given, in a most interesting letter, a detailed account of his last moments. He was at his villa of Careggi, not far from Florence, surrounded by the members of his family; and becoming fully aware of his imminent danger, sent

for a priest to administer the sacrament to him, and to receive his confession. He arrived in the dead of the night, and Lorenzo made exertions beyond his strength, in manifestation of his earnest desire to profit by the solemn occasion. His confession, which was poured forth in the audience of all around him, was prefaced by exclamations in adoration of the sacramental wafer; after which the sentiments he expressed were those of a humble penitent and believing Christian. "Though loaded," he exclaimed, "with thy benefits, most benignant Jesus, I have never duly listened to thy word, and have continually offended thy majesty: but by that divine love, with which thou didst embrace the whole race of mankind; which brought thee down from heaven to earth, which enveloped thee with the bands of our humanity, which prevailed on thee to endure hunger, thirst, cold, heat, labour, derision, reproach, scourging, stripes, and finally death and the cross itself; by that love, oh! Jesus, our Saviour, I beseech thee to hide thy face from my sins, so that when I shall appear before thy judgment-seat (to which I am even now summoned), my guilt and my sins may not prevail to my punishment, but that I may be pardoned through the merits of thy cross." He then, in a calm manner, took an affectionate leave of his eldest son, Piero, suggesting much, both of caution and of counsel, as to his future conduct. Afterwards he conversed in terms of affectionate regard

with his old friend Pico di Mirandula, who came to visit him, and also with Politian. Just as Pico left him, Savonarola arrived. Lorenzo, from the high opinion he entertained of his character, had himself sent for him. What passed at this interview is variously related by his biographers, two of whom, Burlamachi and Pico di Mirandula, have stated that Savonarola urged on him, as the price of taking his confession, three promises; the third being the restoration to Florence of her ancient liberties. To the two first conditions they say that he readily assented, but that on the mention of the third, he turned his head away and was silent. Tiraboschi*, in his article upon Lorenzo, rejects the statements of Burlamachi, &c., and adheres to that of Politian. He justly observes that the opposing narrative makes Lorenzo's compliance with the promises required of him the condition of his receiving the viaticum; whereas this had already been administered to him in the preceding night. Burlamachi, in this and in many other instances, wrote from *hearsay*, and when he does so, is apt to deal much in the incredible.

To have disturbed a dying man by such an exciting topic would have been harsh and uncharitable. Politian was an eye and ear-witness of what passed, and we doubt not that his narrative is substantially correct. It is as follows†:—"Pico

* Storia della Lett. Ital., Pt. i. p. 17. 39.

† Politiani Epis. lib. iv. Ep. 2.

had scarcely gone when Girolamo of Ferrara, a man eminent for learning and holiness of character, a celebrated preacher also of heavenly doctrine, entered the chamber. He exhorted Lorenzo to adhere to the faith. He replied that he firmly did. He further exhorted him, in case of recovery, to lead a new life. Such, he said, was his most fixed intention. He then urged him, as death seemed inevitable, to resign himself to the Divine will. 'Nothing can be more grateful to me,' he replied, 'since it is the will of God.' He was about to take his departure when Lorenzo called after him, 'What, father, are you going without giving me your blessing?' He then declined his head, and composed his countenance in the most devout manner, and responded, duly and readily, to his words and prayers."

In the year 1493, Savonarola preached during Lent at Bologna to crowded auditories. Giovanni Bentivoglio then presided over the state*; and his lady, it appears, was in the habit of coming late to the service attended by a numerous suite, so that her entry caused no small confusion. Savonarola hinted his displeasure again and again, but without effect. At length, upon a studied repetition of the offence, he publicly addressed the lady in a tone of such earnest remonstrance that she became furious, and ordered two of her satel-

* Burlam. p. 50.

lites to push forward instantly, and revenge the insult. They were prompt to obey, but could not penetrate the dense phalanx which surrounded the pulpit and formed an effectual body-guard to the preacher. Assassins, it is added, were afterwards hired to put an end to him, but were so awed on approaching his presence, as to say they came by desire of the princess to receive his commands. We give the outline of the story, as related by Burlamachi, without the legendary matter which, as we conceive, he has mixed up with it. Soon after he returned to Florence in safety, and resumed his usual duties.

What occurred in that city, after the death of Lorenzo, up to the time which laid low the dynasty of the Medici, and re-introduced the republic, has been already stated. After the flight of Piero de' Medici and his brothers, the leading citizens debated among themselves what modifications should take place in its ancient forms, so as to adapt it most perfectly to present exigencies. Whilst they were thus occupied, news arrived that Charles VIII., whose conquering sword had borne down all before him, might shortly be expected before the walls of Florence. This intelligence produced general consternation, it being extremely doubtful what part the king would take with reference to the recent changes. All parties looked upon each other with mutual suspicion, and hope and fear variously agitated the public mind. In the midst

of this political excitement there was one man, and almost only one, who was calm and hopeful, nay, confident, and that man was Savonarola. He had long been persuaded that the corruptions of the age, and in particular those of the Church, would provoke some such crisis as the present. He had expressed this conviction, it will be remembered, as far back as when he first preached at Brescia, A.D. 1484. He now persuaded himself that the approach of the French army signified the speedy fulfilment of his predictions. Under this impression, he addressed his auditors in cheering and triumphant language, and bid them hope that the invasion of Charles VIII. was the precursor of a new era of religious, civil, and moral light in Italy.

The seignory now appointed an embassy, composed of five of the leading citizens (including Savonarola*) to wait on the French king, in order to ascertain his intentions, and, if possible, to dissuade him from approaching Florence. They found Charles at Pisa, and were quickly introduced into his presence. The young monarch, elated with success, and burning for conquest, expected, no doubt, to find in these envoys a set of men humble, submissive, and anxious to win his favour. Great was his surprise when they entered, headed by a man of undaunted mien and aspect, clothed in

* Nardi, Ist. Fior. lib. i. p. 23.; and Compendium Revelationum Savon. p. 237, &c. Scipione Ammirato, Ist. Fioren. lib. xxvi. p. 352.

monkish vestments, who approached him with an air of authority, bearing in his hand the open Gospel, and, as he pointed to it, addressed him, not in the unctuous tones of human flattery, but in a strain of mingled admonition and welcome.

"Great King," he exclaimed, "thou minister of Divine Justice, the mercy of God has long borne with the grievous sins of Italy, and has graciously waited for her repentance. Despite the most sacred obligations, she has lifted up her meretricious and adamantine face, till at length the hour of Divine vengeance is at hand. To his unworthy servant, now before thee, he revealed, more than four years ago, his purpose of reforming the Church by means of severe chastisement. From that time to this, that servant has never ceased urgently to call the people to repentance. Men of all degrees will confirm this assertion. Few believed his words,—the great multitude derided them.

"At length, thou art come, O King! as the minister of God—the minister of Justice. May thy arrival prove to us altogether propitious. Thy approach fills with joy all the servants of Christ, all the lovers of justice, and those who are zealous to act on religious principle. Come on, then, joyful, secure, and triumphant, since He who sent thee is the same who triumphed on the cross for our salvation. But, most Christian King, give ear to my words, and apply them to thy heart.

"The unworthy servant of God to whom those

things have been revealed, on the part of the Holy Trinity, and especially on the part of Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, admonishes thee that, after his example, thou must in all things incline to mercy; but most of all towards his city of Florence, which, although it labours beneath a heavy load of transgression, contains many true servants of God, of both sexes. For their sake, thou must preserve the city, that we may with a more quiet mind pray for thee, and render God propitious to thee in this expedition. The same unworthy servant exhorts and admonishes thee, that with all diligence thou mayest protect and defend the innocent, the widows, the orphans, and all who deserve mercy; but, most of all, that thou guard the chastity of those devoted to Christ in the nunneries, lest through thee sin should superabound, and the strength vouchsafed to thee from on high should be converted into weakness."

There was nothing in the character and habits of Charles, as drawn by Guicciardini, to encourage the sanguine anticipations of the Florentine Reformer. Rash, unstable, voluptuous, uncultivated in mind and deformed in person, easy good-nature was his best quality. Hurried forward by a blind ambition, which had no definite object but conquest, he grew tired of his enterprise as soon as difficulties thwarted him; and after marching to the extremity of Italy with little or no opposition, he became as eager to retrace his steps as he had origi-

nally been to push onward; and at length he re-crossed the Alps, leaving, as the principal vestiges of his presence in fair Italy, wide-spread devastation, and augmented discord.

Savonarola's address, accordingly, was listened to by Charles with astonishment, succeeded by indifference. The ambassadors were dismissed from his presence with vague assurances, and the king was quickly on his march to Florence, where he entered as a conqueror*, and dictated his own terms of peace. They were in the first instance severe, but were subsequently mitigated. The peace was proclaimed in the cathedral of Florence on the 26th of November, 1494.

Within two days after, the French army was in full march for the Papal States, and the Florentines were left at liberty to arrange for themselves their future form of government. The rival pretensions and struggles of contending parties now filled the

* Guicciardini, Ist. lib. i. p. 151.

In the train of Charles VIII. when he entered Florence, was Philip de Comines, the well-known French chronicler. He had heard of the talents and prophetic fame of Savonarola, and sought and obtained an interview with him. He speaks of him as having predicted various events before they occurred, and in particular the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, and as maintaining that the Church would be reformed by the sword. He adds, that various opinions existed as to his prophetic powers; but that he himself believed him to be a good man; and further says, he consulted him as to whether Charles VIII. might venture to go on without danger of his life. De Comines, lib. viii. p. 223.

city with excitement; to put an end to which, and to adopt measures the best suited to win public confidence, the seignory resorted to a Balia, which invested twenty of the leading citizens with supreme authority for the ensuing twelvemonth. In spite of this expedient, dissatisfaction prevailed; a more distinct appeal to the people was deemed necessary; and this feeling was fostered by a treatise from the pen of Savonarola, in which he pointed out, in a sensible and learned manner, the leading arguments in favour both of monarchical and popular government, but recommended that the latter should be adhered to in the case of Florence, as being best adapted to the enterprising temper of its people, and to the cherished traditions of its ancient liberty. This publication produced a great and favourable impression on the public mind, and was followed by an application to its author, from the leading members of the new government, to take some means of more fully explaining to them what he deemed the measures best adapted to the present crisis. Thus urged, he invited the leading authorities of the city, and its male population, to assemble in his church, when he further expatiated upon the advice offered in his pamphlet, and concluded an eloquent address by exhorting the citizens—1st, To do whatsoever they resolved upon in the fear of God. 2ndly, To act on a patriotic preference of the public to private interests. 3rdly, To promulgate a

general amnesty. 4thly, To fix the government on a popular basis. Antonio Soderini, the Gonfaloniere, a citizen of commanding influence, and the other popular leaders, seconded the counsels of Savonarola; and under his advice, the basis of a reformed constitution was laid, by the appointment of a grand council, consisting of all such citizens as could prove that their proximate ancestors had shared in the offices or honours of the state.

No laws were to be framed, nor taxes raised, but by the authority of this council, and it was invested with the power of nominating the executive seignory. A sort of privy council, or senate, composed of eighty members, to be elected by the great council, was also appointed, intermediate between itself and the seignory, to whose judgment all propositions for new laws were to be submitted, before they could come under discussion in the general council.*

In his public address, which led to these important results, Savonarola displayed much learned familiarity with the various forms of government, both ancient and modern; and the advice which he gave was conveyed in terms of moderation and mildness. The vast hall, which forms so striking a feature of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, was now erected by the advice of Savonarola for the

* Guicciardini, lib. ii. p. 213. Nardi, lib. ii. pp. 29. 34. Scipione Ammirato, Ist. Fior. lib. xxvii. p. 354.

meetings of the council, which appear to have consisted of nearly two thousand members *; and places of trust and honour were filled by men devoted to republican institutions. Placed by unforeseen circumstances in this elevated position, any mistakes and errors into which Savonarola subsequently fell, were not those of selfish or vulgar ambition, but of a mind possessed with the noble, though visionary, hope of firmly establishing a theocracy in Florence, in which religion and law should be one and the same. The deference thus paid to his authority, and the commanding influence which it procured him, now put his real character to the test. The avenues of preferment and power were open to him, but he declined office, and voluntary poverty continued to be no less his choice than his practice; and as to reputation and influence, he appeared chiefly to value them as means for giving effect to his various plans of usefulness and reform.

Among these was one for extensive reforms in the convents of his own order throughout Tuscany. He thought the monks led much too easy lives; and with the view of obliging them to turn their leisure to good account, he introduced among them the critical study of the Holy Scriptures, and the culture of the oriental tongues with a view to it;

* It is difficult to ascertain the precise number. Sismondi fixes it at 1800. Hist. vol. xii. p. 244.

as also schools for painting, and for other branches of art. Some eminent men issued from the order, as a consequence of these salutary measures.*

The Christian education of the children and of the youth of Florence had for some time been an object of his special care; and he now formed them, for this purpose, into a distinct order, under the superintendence of his friend and coadjutor Domenico Pescia, a zealous member of the fraternity of San Marco, who often preached for him. How much the forms of instruction in the existing schools needed improvement, may be judged of by various passages in his published sermons. "Go," he says, "into all the schools of Florence†; you will find tutors paid to teach logic and philosophy, the sciences and the arts, but not a single one is charged with the function of teaching the Holy Scriptures. Insensate teachers! see you not, that in making the profane sciences the basis of faith, you lower and degrade instead of raising and exalting it?" In another sermon he says: "What ineffable sweetness does a devout soul experience in reading the Holy Scriptures! He who, amidst the fatigues of the weary pilgrimage of human life, occasionally sits down to refresh and strengthen himself by this viaticum, enjoys the presence of Christ, the beloved of his soul, and is consoled by those tears of ten-

* Lett. ined. di Sav. in Archiv. Istor. Fior.

† Rio, Poësie Chrétienne, vol. i. p. 317.

derness which fill his eyes in contemplating the mercies of God." *

In passages similar in their spirit to these, he often expatiates, in the course of his Sermons, upon the value and authority of the Holy Scriptures. Far from wishing to keep them out of the hands of the laity, his wish was that they should form the basis of all public instruction.

His educational schemes proved so efficacious, that the citizens beheld with wonder their youthful population, hitherto so undisciplined, cheerfully submitting to the restraints of religion and order, and taking delight in mental improvement. The Florentines were fond of music, and, to meet this taste, Savonarola composed a variety of simple hymns, which he adapted to popular airs, and they were recited or sung by the children with equal energy and delight.

* Rio, Poësie Chrétienne, p. 317.

CHAPTER VIII.

PART SECOND.

SPECIMENS OF SAVONAROLA'S ELOQUENCE AND POWER AS A PREACHER. — INDIGNATION OF THE PAPAL GOVERNMENT ON HEARING OF THE FREEDOM WITH WHICH HE EXPOSED THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH AND THE CLERGY. — VAIN ATTEMPTS TO WIN HIM OVER TO ITS INTERESTS. — INFAMOUS CHARACTER OF POPE ALEXANDER VI. — CONSPIRACY TO RESTORE THE MEDICI, AND CONSEQUENT TRIAL AND DEATH OF FIVE LEADING CITIZENS. — REFLECTIONS ON THIS ACT. — THE CARNIVAL CONVERTED INTO A RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL BY SAVONAROLA. — CENSURE ON THE EXTRAVAGANCES ATTENDING IT. — HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE DECLINES. — EXCOMMUNICATED BY THE POPE. — SAVONAROLA'S EXPOSURE OF THE PONTIFF'S VICES. — ADDRESSES LETTERS TO THE POTENTATES OF EUROPE DECLARING HIM TO BE NO TRUE POPE. — ORDEAL OF FIRE. — PUBLIC COMMOTIONS. — TRIAL, CONDEMNATION, DEATH, AND CHARACTER OF SAVONAROLA.

1494 TO 1498.

IN preaching, Savonarola was as indefatigable as ever, and as impressive. Many volumes of his Sermons have been published, chiefly taken down from his lips, between the years 1494 and 1498. The art of reporting was then in its infancy, but imperfect as they must be deemed, these Sermons convey a very high idea of the learning and ability, the lofty

energy, and the devout earnestness of the preacher. If they cannot be praised for an accurate division of the parts, for a logical process of reasoning, or for great elegance of diction, it will be found, to use the words of Tiraboschi*, that, "from time to time, he inveighs and thunders with a power akin to lightning." After citing some illustrative passages, he concludes thus: "Be it remembered that these discourses were not committed to paper by Savonarola himself, but were taken down by reporters; so that we not only want in them the impressive influence of the orator's animated voice, but we must also bear in mind that they come down to us mutilated and imperfect. Yet such as we have them, they are justly to be regarded as the most eloquent that are to be found in the age of which we are treating."

We will now proceed to place before our readers various specimens of the style and matter of these addresses. In doing so we shall, in order to bring the more striking passages before our readers, compress some of those that are introductory to them, yet so as to preserve their spirit and meaning; and even in the important passages, we have occasionally found it essential to use a certain degree of compression, for Savonarola is very discursive. But, as truth is our object, we have given in the Appendix the principal passages in Italian, in

* Tiraboschi, Storia dell. Lett. Ital. lib. iii. p. 329.

proper order and succession, thus enabling readers to judge for themselves.

No. 1.

Extract from Sermon 23rd of the Collection entitled "Quam bonus Israel Deus," preached in the Advent of 1493. *Its subject is, the Condition of the Modern, as contrasted with that of the Primitive Church.*

"The primitive Church was constructed of living stones, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. The Church was then a garden of delights, a very heaven upon earth. How holy was the zeal which animated its pastors for the good of souls! How anxiously did they employ themselves in things divine! What obedience was there in the people; what prudence and discretion in the prelates; what wisdom in the teachers; what truth flowed from the lips of the preachers; what holiness animated the priests; what purity distinguished the youths; what chastity the virgins; what continence the widowed; what mutual faith the married; what love and charity animated the whole body of the faithful! No imagination can adequately conceive the happiness of that time, when they who believed were of one heart and one soul; and when every tongue could feelingly unite in the spirit of that fine sentiment of the psalmist, 'Behold, how sweet and

how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' Alas, how changed the scene! The devil, through the instrumentality of wicked prelates, has destroyed the temple of God.

"The Church is shaken to its foundations. No more are the prophets remembered. The apostles are no longer reverenced. The columns of the Church strew the ground because their bases have given way; in other words, the Evangelists are treated with neglect. The teachers who should expound the Gospels to the people are no longer to be found. Where is the justice of princes and rulers? —where the holy solicitude of the pastors?—where the pious example of the priests and the religious orders? Where is the obedience of the people towards the prelates?—where the discretion of the prelates in their dealings with the people?—where the reverence of the students towards the priests? Lord, why art thou quiet? The enemy rages in thy sanctuary, and, what is worst of all, they who thus act glory in their shame. To sin is the frailty of mortals; to glory in sin is the disposition of devils. The holiest festivals are devoted to worldly amusements, to indecent spectacles, and to games suited to a heathen taste. On Christmas Eve, instead of filling our churches and sharing in their sacred offices, and proffering to God their thanksgivings for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world, Christians, so called, go off to taverns, to gratify their appetites, and to practise all sorts of evil.

This very day I beheld in the streets females, who know better, exercising seductive arts, and clothed with meretricious ornaments. Such are not the insignia of female purity. Priests appear in public, arrayed more pompously than laymen. They are to be found in gambling houses and taverns. They keep concubines. Is not this publicly to blazon the evidence of their sins. The nuns too: their delight is to stand at the grate all the day, and to chatter with thoughtless youths. What does such conduct argue, but the absence of all real devotion? When the pastor revels in vice, his flock will naturally precipitate themselves into vice also. The cure of souls involves a high responsibility. The prelates and pastors of our day are prostrated in their affections to earth and to earthly things. The cure of souls has no hold upon their hearts. The aim of preachers is to please those in authority, so as to ensure their praise and approbation. Thus the Church, once so justly honoured, has been remoulded into a Church according to their own fashion. This is the modern Church. It is not built with living stones. Within it are not found Christians rooted in that living faith which works by love. It is an edifice of wood; made up in no small degree of Christians prepared as fuel for the fires of perdition. Their love is only in word, not in deed and in truth. Go to Rome,—go through all Christendom; study what is passing in the houses of great prelates and grand masters. Poetry and oratory chiefly occupy

their thoughts. They prepare themselves by the study of Virgil, and Horace, and Cicero, for the cure of souls. Will you believe it? the government of the Church is in no small degree directed by astrologers. There is hardly a prelate or grand master who has not something to do with astrologers; they will even rely upon them to calculate the precise hour at which they may ride out, or do any other ordinary act of every-day life. And, as to our preachers, they may be said to have deserted the Holy Scriptures for astrology and philosophy. These they idolise, and only regard the Scriptures as the handmaidens of philosophy. Our Church is not wanting in outward ceremonies. Its sacred rites are solemnised with splendid vestments, rich hangings, and candlesticks of gold and silver. The chalices are numerous and beautiful, and produce a brilliant effect. There you may behold prelates with mitres of gold, adorned with precious stones, and bearing croziers of silver. You may see them, at the altar, arrayed in copes stiff with gold, and bordered with brocade, chanting the finest vespers, and the most beautiful masses, with the accompaniment of such striking ceremonies, such voices, and such organ music, that you are perfectly astonished. You cannot doubt that they must be men of great holiness and gravity. You can hardly believe that such men can possibly be in error; you are ready to conclude that what they say and do is true as the Gospel. Such is the modern Church. Its

members feed on these husks, and are enchanted with these ceremonies. And they say that the Church of CHRIST JESUS was never before in so flourishing a condition; and that divine worship was never before so well conducted. As for the primitive bishops, in comparison of those we have been describing, they proclaim them to have scarcely deserved the appellation of prelates. The primitive bishops, it is true, were scarcely to be termed *prelates*, because forsooth they were poor and humble men; they could not boast of great revenues and rich abbeys like the modern. They had neither mitres nor chalices of gold; or, if they had them, they were ready to sacrifice them for the necessities of the poor: whereas modern prelates extort from the poor the very pittance which their necessities require, in order to procure such chalices. In the primitive Church, the chalices were of wood, and the prelates of gold. Now-a-days the Church has prelates of wood, and chalices of gold. St. Thomas Aquinas was one day addressed by a great prelate, similar probably to those we have been describing; he had in his hands one or two basons of gold full of ducats; and, holding them out, he exclaimed, 'See, Master Thomas, the Church can no longer say, like St. Peter, silver and gold have I none.' 'True,' replied St. Thomas, 'neither can the Church any longer effectually use the words that follow your citation, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*' The bishops of those days were

not prelates in virtue of grand temporalities, but they were such in a far higher sense; they were emphatically great prelates. They were men of holiness and virtue; of high authority with the people; and much reverenced by them on account of their admirable qualities, and for the miracles which they wrought.

"What then, Lord, doest thou? why dost thou sleep? Rise, Lord, and liberate thy Church from the power of demons and tyrants, from the hands of wicked prelates. Lord, beholdest thou not our affliction? Hast thou forgotten thy Church? Dost thou no longer love her? has she ceased to be dear to thee? She is still thy bride; dost thou not know her? Yet she is the same for which thou didst descend into the Virgin's womb, and didst assume our human nature, and didst suffer reproach; for which also thou didst shed thy blood upon the cross. Come, then, Lord, for her deliverance,—come, I say, and punish these wicked men; confound and humble them that we may peaceably serve thee."

No. 2.

Extracts and Sentiments from a Sermon preached in the Cathedral of Florence, on January 13th, 1494, *on Reform in the Church.*

"The Church may be compared to a fig-tree, which, in the first year of its maturity, produced a great many figs and no leaves; in the second, many

figs and few leaves; in the third, as many leaves as figs; in the fourth, more leaves than figs; in the fifth, few figs and a multitude of leaves; till at length, as time rolled on, it yielded leaves alone; and not only produced no fruit, but injured the neighbouring plants by its overshadowing foliage. You cannot doubt that the gardener would cut down such a tree, and condemn it to the flames. Thus the Church, which in primitive times produced abundant fruit, and, as it were, no leaves, has gradually deteriorated, and now bears leaves only and fruit none. In other words, outward ceremonies abound; so also do pomp and superfluities; and as the thick foliage of the barren fig-tree injured the adjoining plants, so the prelates, by their evil example and influence, seduce men into sins innumerable. The husbandman, that is to say, Christ, will at length come, and will cut down the tree. Then will the Church be reformed. . . .

"When Pope Innocent VIII. died, I was laughed at for saying that the Church must be reformed. At that time I beheld, in vision, a black cross suspended over Babylonian Rome; on that cross was inscribed—*The wrath of the Lord.* Swords, daggers, lances, arms of all sorts, gleamed around it, mingled with hail, with devouring lightning and thunderbolts; all enveloped in the lurid obscurity of a dark and horrible tempest. I saw also another cross; it was of gold, and reached from earth to heaven. It hovered above Jerusalem, and on it

was inscribed—*The mercy of God.* A serene, limpid, and pure atmosphere surrounded it. Hence, I gather that a reform of the Church is at hand.

"I predicted, years before it happened, the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, that of Pope Innocent, and the crisis which would occur here at Florence in a change of the government.

"Oh! Florence, this supernatural light has not been vouchsafed me for any merit of my own, but for your sake; so that when the scourge descends it may not be in your power to plead ignorance. You well know how earnest have been my warnings, and yet you are still obdurate.

"Oh! Italy, oh! princes of Italy, and you prelates of the Church, the wrath of God impends over you; and repentance is the sole remedy. Repent, then, while the sword still remains undrawn; repent before it leaps from its scabbard, and becomes dyed in blood.

"And thou, Rome, hast also been faithfully warned, yet continuest obdurate. The wrath of God is at hand. Say whether Rome is not full of pride and luxury, of avarice and simony; say whether the ungodly do not daily multiply within her, and that therefore the scourge impends."

No. 3.

From Sermon, Quam bonus est Deus.

"The wisdom of God has said beautiful things concerning the power of Charity or Divine Love.

Under its constraining influence the apostles and saints of the Primitive Church became as separated from the spirit of the world as the body is from the soul by death. In vain the Jews tried to put down these champions of the faith by bitter persecution. In vair the Roman power set in array against them every species of punishment, and every form of martyrdom. No less vain were the arts and efforts of philosophers, rhetoricians, and heretics, to subdue their constancy by specious arguments and bland insinuations.

"How is it that so little of this spirit of Divine Love, by means of which they effected such wonders, still exists among Christians? Is it not because they are so absorbed by earthly objects and earthly affections as to be incapable of yielding to the condescending appeal of Divine mercy—'*My son, give me thine heart*'? To hearts thus preoccupied, it is in vain to descant on the love of Jesus Christ, and on the deep humiliation and bitter sufferings which he voluntarily endured in order to achieve the great work of human redemption. They are as incapable of comprehending it, as of participating in the elevated feelings which prompted St. Paul, in the contemplation of this love, to exclaim 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;' and again, 'I account all things but dung that I may win Christ.' (Phil. iii. 7, 8.)"

Pursuing this train of thought in a style of lofty enthusiasm, he concludes as follows:—

"I will endure all things for the sake of that redeeming Love which makes all other things sweet and pleasant to me. This is sufficient for me, and fills up all my desires. This is my exceeding great reward. If I possessed the whole world, but had no part in Christ, I should be utterly destitute; but if I possess Thee, oh, my Saviour! and nothing else besides, I possess in Thee everything; because, Thou art 'all in all.' In Thee is the sum of all good; out of Thee, there is no real good: what can I possibly desire which is not far more inherent in Thee than in everything else without Thee? In Thee are riches, incorruptible and perpetual: in Thee honour and glory, stable and true: in Thee power and strength, irresistible and indefectible: in Thee health and beauty, free from all decay or change: in Thee is knowledge without error; pleasure without amaritude; joy without sorrow; light without darkness; life without death; duration without end; good without any admixture of evil; beatitude without misery: finally, I am ever with Thee, because it is good for me to draw nigh unto God. See then, how the love of Jesus Christ reduces all mortal objects to nothing."

No. 4.

The following passage ranks among the most remarkable to be found in the Sermons of Savona-

rola, since it forcibly condemns, on the authority of the New Testament, that system of Maryology, to which Roman Catholics cling (especially in Italy) with such fond tenacity. It occurs in his twenty-second Sermon on the book of Job, page 180., edit. Venet. 1545.

We give the original in a note below.

"You may perhaps inquire why, since the Virgin is in the highest degree to be praised, I so rarely preach about her; and I first beg to ask you, why the Holy Spirit has in so few instances made mention of her in the Scriptures, and why the primitive saints preached not, or but little, about her? And should you say, that in these days people are more devoted to her than were those primitive saints and fathers, I should deem such an answer nothing to the purpose, nor credible: for we see that the apostles, who so much loved and honoured her, have made little or no mention of her in their writings. How did this happen? The apostles have not written about the Virgin, because our salvation depends on faith in Christ, and they, who were wholly bent upon this point, preached nothing but Christ. Besides, in consequence of the great light they had from God, their views were wholly fixed upon Him, and not on the creature. Favoured with that great light, the apostles had no need to have recourse to such a topic in order to excite people to faith: yet they did not the less feel for her the greatest love and reverence. Besides, had those

apostles recorded the praises of the Virgin, and dwelt on her profound humility, her immense charity, and her other boundless virtues, people would probably have read the Gospel of the Virgin more than the Gospel of the Acts of Christ, and would have made a Divinity of her, and have regarded her as such. The devotion of people towards the Virgin is very great; even wicked men have a greater fear and dread of blaspheming her than any other being. Since, then, the object of the apostles was to praise and exalt Christ, and to prove that He alone is God, and that He and He alone is the Messiah who came to save the world, I, like them, have attempted, as you well know, for many years to preach according to the Scripture. And since the Scripture makes little mention of the Virgin, it has not been my habit to speak much of her." *

* "Ma perche tu mi potresti dire essendo la Vergine da esser laudata quanto dir si possa: perche cagione io ne predichi così rade volte: e io domando prima a te: lo Spirito Santo perche ha fatto così poche volte nelle scritture mentione di lei? E perche cagione quelli primi Santi non predicavano di lei, ò poco? E se tu dicessi che hoggidì gli huomini sono più devoti di lei, che quelli primi Santi e antichi padri nostri: questo per niente non è da dire ne da crederlo: e tamen noi vediamo che gli Apostoli che tanto l' amavano e tantó l' havevano in veneratione, non hanno scritto di lei, ò poco. Dimmi perche è stato questo? Gli Apostoli non hanno scritto della Vergine, perche la salute nostra depende dalla fede di Christo: e loro ch' erano intenti tutti a questo, non predicavano altro che Christo. Præterea per il lume grande che havevano di Dio, erano a lui sempre intenti e non alle creature: e per il grande lume che havevano, non havevano bisogno quegli Apostoli di

"God is a just judge, and an avenger. He cannot err through ignorance, for He is essential wisdom; nor through malice, for He is supereminent goodness: nor can any power stay the force of His judgments, for He is omnipotent. Let us then patiently wait for the final judgment; for it will then clearly appear that His providence presides over all things, and that, either here or hereafter, He will requite the faithful with good, and the unrighteous with evil."

No. 5.

From the 28th Sermon of the series Quam bonus, &c. (pp. 466, 467.).

"Christ has declared 'it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;' and all experi-

questa esca, per incitare le persone alla fide: benche niente dimanco havessino sempre a lei grandissimo amore, e grandissima reverentia. Præterea se quegli Apostoli havessino scritto le laude della Vergine, e della sua profonda humilità e della immensa charità, e dell' altre virtù che sono infinite: le persone sempre per avventura più harebbono letto l' evangelio della Vergine, che delle cose di Christo, e harebbonla fatta e tenuta come Dio. La devotione delle persone verso della Vergine è molto grande: vedilo che etiam i cattivi huomini hanno più timore e horrore nel biastemmare la Vergine, che ognaltri: e però gli Apostoli attesono a laudare e essaltare Christo e a mostrare che lui solo era Dio, e era il Messia venuto a salvare il mondo e non altri. Io ho atteso a predicare la scrittura come tu hai veduto più e più anni: e perche la scrittura parla poco della Vergine, non m' è occorso molto parlare, per questo non te ne pigliare ammiratione."—*Prediche sopra Job*, Pred. 22. p. 188.

ence teaches us how difficult it is for men, under the influence of a high state of worldly prosperity, 'to walk with God.' Point out to me one man who has lived a saintly life under such circumstances, and I will engage to point out to you, in return for this one, ten thousand who have served God faithfully in a condition of trial and adversity.

"What is the first desire of a just man who is truly bent upon leading a spiritual life? You will find that at the very outset he is content to become familiar with what the world deems adversity, and that he even loves it. You will find him willing, for instance, to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ, and disposed to contemn worldly wealth in comparison of spiritual treasures.

"Examine the conduct of a true penitent. You will find him anxious to make restitution to the last farthing of all that he may have usuriously or unjustly derived from his neighbour; he will act thus, not grudgingly, but magnanimously. It is thus that he will begin to love poverty, which is accounted one of the forms of adversity. Acting in the same spirit, he will bring his body into subjection by fasting, by discipline, and by abstinence; and the more he acquires the spirit of Divine Love, the more highly he will love and embrace adversity. We see how God conducted Joseph, by the path of tribulation, to the greatest glory, even in this world. Joseph is the representative of the just man who continually advances in Divine charity. And as

Joseph might have enjoyed great delights and pleasures, and not have been imprisoned, yet he chose to renounce them all, and to be incarcerated rather than to sin; in like manner, the just man suffers adversity even unto death, rather than to wander from God into the ways of sin. By the path of tribulation Joseph was advanced to a temporal kingdom; by the same path the just man reaches the kingdom of heaven.

"So infinite are the perfections of God, that He ought to be loved by His creatures for His own sake, without reference to mercenary motives. All creatures are imperfect and finite. God is perfect and infinite. He, and only He, can adequately fill and satisfy the capacities of our immortal nature. To know, and love, and serve Him, and faithfully to adhere to Him, is the proper aim and end of our being."

Substance of pp. 469. *and* 473., 18*th Sermon.*

"Ask the martyrs whether it was good for them thus to adhere unto God. Had not their faith and constancy been sustained by His grace, they could not have endured their inconceivable sufferings. This it was which rendered them proof against the nails, the rack, the gridiron, and the flames. Since it proved thus good for them to adhere to God, it must be equally so for you and for me. Thou, Lord, art my Supreme good, without admixture of

evil; Thou art my joy without sorrow, my strength without weakness, my essential truth without error; Thou, Lord, art my all in all. Thou kindlest the affections into love, and thou canst beatify all the powers of the mind and heart. It is therefore good for me to draw nigh to God. And, finally, thou wilt beatify the body as well as the soul, by raising it up incorruptible and immortal, spiritual and impassible. Yes, it is good to draw nigh to God, and on Him to repose all our hopes, — not on earthly possessions; not on money, nor power, nor worldly reputation, not on friends or relatives. 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' (Jer. xvii. 5. 7.)"

No. 6.

Extracts from the 7th Sermon of the same Series.

"The doctors and preachers of the present day, whose duty it is to awaken the dead in sin to newness of life, know not how to set about it. Instead of arousing dead souls to life, they amuse them with curious questions and subtleties, or with fine similes or brilliant passages derived from Aristotle and Virgil, from Ovid and Cicero, or from the beautiful poems of Dante and Petrarch. Used for such a purpose, these are strains of death; for instead of resuscitating torpid souls, they tend to lull

the living into a deathly slumber. Oh! my God, what can equal the infatuation of those modern teachers and theologians who thus attempt to explain the great doctrines which concern our salvation by authorities derived from pagan authors! Of them, and of their teaching, it may well be said, 'But Israel does not know.' And why have they not known me? saith God;—why have they destroyed my people? why have they not taught them the way of truth? Instead of thus instructing them, they will say to them, 'Good people, how much good you do; how devout you are; what precious relics you possess; what hospitals, what monasteries; how grand are your processions, how numerous your festivals! You have great reason to bless God. We really know of no city so admirably ordered in all that concerns Divine worship; nor so devoted to almsgiving.' Alas! these are vain flatteries. My brethren, the men who thus pronounce you *blessed*, are only deceiving you with vain words. They teach you not the way of holy living; nor how to exercise patience in tribulation; nor how to interpret the providence of God when you see His true servants afflicted and depressed, and His enemies triumphant and exalted. The solution of such questions is beyond the scope of their philosophy. What you ought to be taught is, that the doctrine of the Church is the Gospel, which explains the goodness of God, and the mode of attaining eternal happiness; the doctrine of

Divine Love, how it perfects the soul, and moulds it to the contemplation of things invisible. The lively perception of these great truths depends upon the grace of the Holy Spirit; and the communication of this grace is the great privilege attendant on the Gospel. The prophet Jeremiah, rapt into future times, thus forcibly delineates its transforming influence:—'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' (Jer. xxxi. 33.) The latter times here referred to, are those of the Messiah, who should thus communicate the grace of His Spirit to His disciples. And St. Paul writes to the same effect in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians:—'Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men;' 'written,' he goes on to say, 'not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.' (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.) St. Paul, in the eighth of the Romans, says, 'The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death:' that is to say, the written law is the law of life, when it instrumentally imparts life by uniting the soul to Jesus Christ in faith and love. It is well for you to carry about this Gospel: I do not mean the written Gospel, though it is well for you to carry this about reverently; but if you possess not the grace of the Holy Spirit, carry about as many printed copies as you will, and as many

prayers as you can collect; nay, carry about with you all the four Gospels, and they will all avail you little. Still more deluded are those who carry about their necks multitudes of texts which they sell at the fairs, and hope to be saved by them; and think, whatever harm they do, God is bound to preserve them, on account of these charms—deluded that they are.

"'Wear,' says a friar or priest, 'this brief, and this text of Scripture, and nothing will hurt you.' Behold into what ignorance we are plunged: we neglect truths that are essential, and of the greatest importance, and we betake ourselves to idle stories, and paper charms, and to prayers, some of which proceed from the Evil One. We neglect the Gospels of Christ, and the books of Christ, by means of which we might learn how to live as Christians, and we give ourselves to fables. By all means, then, read the books of Christ. But what are they? The books of Christ are the apostles, and the holy and good men who have trod in their steps. But in our days these books, that is to say, such holy men, are past away. The present race of men are become, as it were, books of the devil. Read them, and you will see that so it is; consider their lives and manners, and you will find that they are books of the devil; the ecclesiastics more especially; they are forward enough to give orders to their dependants, but as to raising their own hands to do any thing essentially good, expect it not.

They are such as those of whom our Lord has said, 'The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat,' adding, 'they say, and do not. They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them upon men's shoulders: but they will not move them with one of their fingers.' (Matt. xxiii. 4.) These are the men who profess to detest pride and ambition, and yet are absolutely engulphed in both: they preach chastity, and keep concubines; they enjoin fasting, and they live splendidly; they praise charity, and will give nothing to the poor. Are not these, then, like bad books—books of the devil? He writes, he imprints within them his own malice, his own vices; and therefore the Church is ruined; and the holy books of which I spoke, the Scriptures, and the lives of the saints, are no longer seen. Neither is there anything like salutary doctrine to be found. The Lord describes such persons as 'salt which has lost its savour,' 'good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.' They may have the salt of mere knowledge, but it becomes salt without savour, in consequence of their bad example.

"Let us, then, turn away from these, to the true doctrine of the Church, which preaches to us equally by precept and example."

No. 7.

Predica 7. Quam bonus.

"The ark from which we extract our doctrine

is the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Our Saviour is the true Moses saved out of the waters, mild and gentle above all men. 'Learn of me,' he himself says, 'for I am meek and lowly of heart.' Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter; he shed his blood upon the cross, and paid the debt of Adam and of the whole human race; and so delivered his people from the hard servitude of the devil. This ark is the Church which the Saviour founded by means of his doctrine, of his miracles, and of the holy example of his most innocent life. And then dying on the cross, he presented it spotless to his Father. Over this ark God sits; for the mercy-seat means the human nature of Christ, which is, as it were, the seat of God, according to our Lord's words, 'The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.' (John xiv. 12.) And well may we call our Saviour the mercy-seat, since St. Paul declares, concerning him, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' (Rom. iii. 15.) St. John writes to the same effect in his first Epistle: 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' (1 John ii. 2.) Through the medium of this propitiatory we receive the answers of God; for all the grace and all the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit come to us through Christ. If you feel the burden of your sins, if you are sensible that you have offended God, betake yourselves to this medium of re-

conciliation, to this mercy-seat; come to Jesus Christ with faith and humble confidence. You shall thus receive the remission of your sins, and shall be reconciled to the Father through the mediation of the Son. See how St. John invites you to this propitiatory. 'My little children,' he says, 'these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.' And who is he? 'Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins.' (1 John ii. 1, 2.) If, then, you desire to partake of the grace of the Saviour, and to be instructed in the way of salvation, you must come to this mercy-seat. There is no grace to be obtained but through this one medium. It is for this very reason that the Church beseeches God to impart to her all the graces which she requires, on account of the merits of Christ, saying, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Let me, then, earnestly invite people of every class, whether old or young, high or low, rich or poor, healthy or infirm, sinners or just, to this mercy-seat. There make known your wants; and doubt not that if you ask in faith and humility, a gracious answer will proceed thence. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

No. 8.

Predica 7.

"Evangelical truth is assailed in the present day by hypocrites, and by Christians falsely so called;

they corrupt it by word of mouth, and still more by their bad examples. They are more dangerous enemies of the truth than even the heretics, because people are on their guard against heretics, as such, but not against them. The simple sheep imagine that so long as they assent to what they hear, they may live like their teachers, whose actions and words are at total variance; and thus their souls are ruined. Nevertheless the true doctrine shall never be wholly extinguished, for the Providence of God will always raise up, as need may be, champions for its defence. Thus it always has been, and shall be.

The transforming, sanctifying influence of the doctrine of Christ, upon the minds and dispositions of those who truly receive it, attests its truth. From earthly and sensual, they are rendered by it spiritual and heavenly-minded. Great and signal have been the holy triumphs of the faith in past times. Through the influence of this life-giving doctrine, the proud became humble, the ambitious unassuming, the luxurious self-denying, the sensual chaste, the avaricious charitable; in one word, its disciples became eminent in every species of holy living.

"It is in vain, however, that I preach this doctrine to you, unless it reaches your hearts, and is written on them. The soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom. God himself speaks to such souls, and enlightens them in all that concerns their sal-

vation. 'What house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?' (Acts vii. 49, 50.) I want not, he seems to say, your churches, nor your sacerdotal vestments; although when you order these things aright, with a view to my glory, I esteem them duly. But again, 'What house will ye build me, or what is the place of my rest?' As though he had said, 'I am not a body that can be inclosed within any of these material objects; nor do I delight in pompous outward ceremonies; for I am a spirit, and I dwell in the minds of such men as are truly humble and contrite.' 'To that man will I look, saith the Lord; even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' (Isa. lxvi. 2.)

"The saints of God have often chosen the path of present suffering and difficulty, because it led them to eternal felicity. Thus 'Moses, when he came to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.' (Heb. xi. 24—26.)

"Those who have been dearest to God, in every age, belong to the same class as Moses, and have acted upon the same high and holy principles which swayed his choice and conduct. This is the doc-

trine of the mercy-seat; this the light which conducts to eternal truth and blessedness."

The papal court, full of indignation at the mode in which Savonarola thus denounced the vices of the clergy and invoked a reform of the Church, cited him to Rome in the year 1495 to explain his opinions and to vindicate his conduct; but the seignory zealously interposed on his behalf, and pressed for a withdrawal of the citation, assuring the pope in their dispatches that his character was unimpeachable and his preaching truly edifying. In consequence of the citation he suspended his preaching, but at the earnest request of the seignory resumed it towards the close of the year.

The people, regarding him as a persecuted confessor, flocked in greater numbers than ever to hear him. The interest which he took in the education and religious instruction of the children continued to be unceasing, as also the assistance rendered him in this work by his friend Domenico Pescia.

Had this important branch of Christian duty been pursued as it commenced, in a wise and sober spirit, the consequences would have been altogether beneficial; but the empire which Savonarola obtained over the youth of the city was so complete, that he ended by making them the agents of his reforming schemes in ways which often rendered their interference troublesome and intrusive.

The year 1495 appears to have been the most

brilliant epoch of his brief autocracy. His influence pervaded more or less every department of the state; the seignory, aided by public opinion, protected him against papal vengeance; and he was left at liberty to prosecute his plans of reform with little opposition.

Before the close of the year 1495 brief had succeeded brief, forbidding him to preach at Florence, and ordering him to quit the city, and to exercise his ministry where he should be further directed. He prepared to depart, but neither the magistracy nor the people would hear of it, and at their call he quickly resumed his public ministrations. Charles VIII. quitted Naples in the course of this year, and it was much feared he might revisit Florence on his march homewards. Savonarola was in consequence deputed to wait on him, which he did at Poggibondi; and whether owing to his persuasion or to the anxiety of the king to reach France without delay, he showed no disposition to embarrass the Florentines by his presence. In the year 1496, he reappeared in the cathedral as the Lent preacher; and its vast area was so densely crowded, that various expedients were necessarily resorted to, for increasing the means of accommodation.

Hitherto the proceedings of the Romish court towards him had been marked by much moderation, and neither his own contumacy, nor that of the seignory, had provoked any signal act of

retaliation. Attempts, there is good reason to suppose, were even made to win him over to the interests of the papacy by baits held out to his ambition; and one of these especially, mentioned by his friend Burlamachi, is so remarkable, and yet rests, we may add, on such credible authority, that we will recite the particulars.*

To his great surprise, he one day received a visit from Lodovico di Ferrara, Master of the Papal Palace, who, in the course of a long interview, gave him to understand, that if he would consent to relinquish his undutiful course of conduct to the court of Rome, and pay it due homage and deference, there was nothing that the pope would not be disposed to do for his advantage, hinting that he might, in such case, even look forward to the honour of a red hat. He treated his visitor with great respect, and told him, that if he would condescend to become one of his auditors at the church of San Marco, on the ensuing morning, he would take means of conveying his reply. Thither the Dignitary accordingly went, and the holy monk, soon after commencing his sermon, took occasion

* M. Perrens cites various satisfactory proofs of the authenticity of this anecdote, to which he shows that Savonarola often alluded, and in particular in his 18th Sermon, on the prophet Micah, where he says, "Io non voglio cappelli, non mitre grandi nè piccoli. Non voglio se non quello che tu hai dato alli tuoi santi, la morte, uno cappello rosso, uno cappello di sangue."— Vol. i. p. 93.

to say in a most impressive manner, that could he conceive the offer of a red hat to be made to him as the price of his integrity, he would reply, that the only red hat to which he aspired was one dyed red in the blood of his own martyrdom. When this reply was reported to the pope by his agent, he is said to have exclaimed, "This man, after all, must be a true servant of God."

Roderic Borgia, from whose lips these words are said to have escaped, and who now wore the triple crown under the title of Alexander VI., united great talents to shameless profligacy. The vices of his immediate predecessors Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII. had been sufficiently notorious. It remained for him to acquire a name almost unparalleled in the annals of infamy. Plausible and insinuating, but faithless and vindictive, insatiable of power and wealth, but reckless of the means of acquiring them, his time and thoughts were divided between schemes of unbounded ambition and of the grossest sensuality. Raised to the papacy by notorious simoniacal acts *, he habitually practised them by the open sale of indulgences, and by disposing of ecclesiastical dignities and benefices without reserve to the highest bidders. By means like

* In all which relates to the career of Savonarola, and to his tragical death, I have resorted with much confidence to what appears to me the honest testimony of Jacopo Nardi, the Florentine historian.

these he raised funds to recruit his armies, wasted by perpetual warfare with the Roman barons; he provided for the splendours of his voluptuous court, for his own personal pleasures, and for the prodigal expenditure of his natural children. These he scrupled not to introduce as such, on public occasions, in contempt of common decency, and of all that is most sacred in the laws of God and man. He loaded them with titles and places, and sought to form matrimonial alliances for them with foreign potentates, some of whom were base enough to encourage his advances. His second son, Cæsar Borgia, created first of all Archbishop of Toledo, then a cardinal, and finally, after being allowed to renounce his ecclesiastical dignities, Duke of Valentino, and General of the Papal Armies, inherited his father's talents and rivalled his father's crimes. The circumstances of domestic wickedness and impurity recorded of both recall the blackest scenes in the annals of the courts of Imperial Rome. The Duke of Gandia, the Pope's eldest son, and his beautiful but vicious daughter, Lucretia, form also conspicuous figures in the same scenes. In a military point of view, and in the success of his political schemes, his life had been, on the whole, prosperous; but the closing circumstances of his earthly career seemed to intimate, that Providence had specially reserved for that hour, an appropriate retribution of his monstrous crimes. He and his son Cæsar had often used poison to rid themselves of

enemies, or to gain possession of the wealth of rich ecclesiastics, whom they called their dear friends. Among these Cardinal Corneto was a suitable victim, on account of his numerous benefices and large fortune. His death was therefore decreed, and poison was to be the instrument. A flattering invitation was sent to the cardinal to a banquet in the Villa of the Belvidere adjoining the Vatican. When the day arrived, the duke delivered a poisoned wine to the pope's butler, with strict injunctions not to hand it round at the banquet till he gave him orders. During a short absence of the butler, another servant served this wine by mistake, and the pope, the duke, and the cardinal, all drank of it. Its deleterious effects were rapid and awful. The poison quickly acted on the duke, but by the use of powerful antidotes, and by the strength of his constitution, he recovered after a severe illness. As for the cardinal, he assured his contemporary Paulus Jovius, that soon after drinking the wine he felt a consuming fire in his entrails, followed by loss of sight, and then by stupefaction, and that, though he finally rallied, his whole body became tettered and excoriated. But the pope was an aged man, and on him the poison operated fatally. He was carried back to his palace in a state of agony which quickly terminated in his death, A. D. 1503, at the age of 71, and after a reign of eleven years and one day. Public horror and hatred rose to the highest pitch on hearing the various versions

of this story.* The body of the deceased pope quickly became black and loathsome. It was exposed for a short time with the usual ceremonies in St. Peter's. "All Rome," says Guicciardini, "flocked to that sight, and could not sufficiently satiate their eyes with gazing on the remains of this extinct serpent, who, by his immoderate ambition, pestiferous perfidy, monstrous lust, and every sort of horrible cruelty, and unexampled avarice, selling without distinction property sacred and profane, had compassed the destruction of so many by poison, and was now become its victim."

Such is the language in which the great Italian historian heaps infamy upon the memory of Alexander VI.,—such was the man whom Savonarola at length provoked beyond redress, and who became bent on compassing his destruction.

His course of Sermons during the Lent of 1496 was upon the prophet Amos; and aware that, in preaching at all, he was acting in defiance of papal authority, he attempted by specious and ingenious

* Guicciardini, lib. vi. p. 163. There are various versions of this story, which Voltaire has questioned on no sufficient grounds. Ranke, in his History of the Popes, relates the facts substantially as we have done. (History of the Popes, vol. i. p. 52.) So, also, does Sismondi, Hist. Ital. Rep. vol. xiii. p. 246. Burchard's different version, which makes the pope die of a fever, may be reconciled with the fact of poison, by merely supposing that Alexander's consequent death was more lingering than Guicciardini supposes. "The best contemporary authorities," says Sismondi, "all agree upon the main facts."

statements to reconcile the act with his acknowledgment of the doctrine of papal supremacy. He had better have said at once that he acted under the influence of a mission from above, superior to papal authority; but this would have identified him with heresy in the judgment of his hearers, and he therefore vainly twists and turns in his arguments, to prove that, in spite of his contumacy, he was still orthodox. In the midst of all this, he thunders forth against Rome and its corruptions more fiercely than ever, and with such effect, that the pope put forth a commission to pass judgment on his proceedings, which adjudged him guilty of heresy and schism.

In the year 1497, a conspiracy for the restoration of the Medici was discovered and frustrated, and five citizens of high consideration implicated in it were, after trial by a commission specially appointed for the purpose, condemned to capital punishment. They and their friends, upon the passing of the sentence, claimed the benefit of an article in the new constitution, granting the privilege of an appeal to the Great Council in capital cases.

After debates extending through several days, a majority of the seignory, and of the members of the commission, came to the conclusion that in convictions like the present, for high treason, criminals were excluded from this privilege, and they were accordingly beheaded in the night of August 21st. During the period of debate and suspense,

Florence was fiercely agitated by contrary interests and conflicting opinions, and, as many of those who voted against the appeal were friends of Savonarola, reproaches were cast upon him for not having interposed his influence and his eloquent voice on the side of mercy, and of the law of appeal. We should have been glad that it had been so; although it is not probable that at such a crisis, when the very existence of the Government was at stake, even his influence could have prevailed against the general conviction of the heads of the popular party that the only course of safety for themselves, and for the State, was the one taken. Savonarola, however, does appear, on the authority of a statement of his own, quoted by M. Perrens, to have recommended that the capital punishment should have been commuted into a sentence of banishment.*

We must now advert to certain circumstances

* Bayle is very severe upon Savonarola in the above matter, but quotes no authority worthy of notice excepting Guicciardini, whom he misrepresents. That historian says that those opposed to granting the appeal were friends of Savonarola, and that much abuse was, in consequence, cast upon him. But he and Nardi clearly indicate the ground of resistance to the appeal, in the following passages:—

"E perciò fecero rileggere i processi, e confrontando con essi i nuovi amici, giudicavano finalmente che eziandio, *secondo le leggi*, non si *poteva*, *ne si doveva* in cosa tanto importante ammettere l' appelazione."—*Nardi*, lib. ii. p. 67.

Guicciardini states that it was argued by those opposed to the appeal, "Che le leggi medesime concedevano, che per fuggire i tumulti potessero essere le leggi in caso simile dispensate." —*Guicc. Hist.* lib. iii. p. 140.

in which his monkish rigidity betrayed him into indefensible errors.

The last day of the carnival had long been regarded by the people as their own, and had been habitually spent in excess of licence. Assisted by his youthful police, and seconded by his coadjutor Domenico Pescia and others, he had succeeded, among his other reforms, in transmuting this day into a religious festival. There was a showy procession enlivened by bands of music; the children of his various schools, to the number of many thousands, followed in ordered files; the Dominican friars, also, and large numbers of the citizens took part in the ceremonial. A halt was made at the doors of the principal houses of the city, and the owners were invited to give up any books or pictures of an indecorous character, in order that they might be dealt with as might afterwards be determined. The enthusiasm of the children in pressing this demand knew no bounds, and many of the citizens so shared in it, as almost to force compliance.

Trinkets, ornaments, money, and rich dresses, were also collected, as voluntary offerings in aid of a charitable establishment for the relief of the poor, entitled Monte di Pietà. It had been founded by Savonarola, and appears to have been admirably conducted.

Mystic dances and sacred songs formed part of the ceremonial, and the whole scene was strongly tinged by fanaticism.

Such were the leading features of the festival in the year 1496; but in the following year the extravagance of the parties concerned in it knew no bounds.

Savonarola's friend, Francesco Valori, was now at the head of the Government, and all the arrangements of the carnival were consequently subject to their mutual disposal. In addition to the sort of showy procession already described, and to its former accompaniments, Savonarola resolved upon a holocaust of all the various offending objects which the children and citizens had collected in their rounds through the city, now or on any former occasion.

A pyramidal scaffold was erected for this purpose in the public place, opposite the palace of the seignory. At its base were to be seen false beards and hair, masquerading dresses, cards and dice, mirrors and perfumery, beads and trinkets of various sorts; higher up were arranged books and drawings, busts, and portraits of the most celebrated Florentine beauties; and even pictures by great artists, condemned in many instances, on very insufficient grounds, as indecorous or irreligious.

Even Frà Bartolomeo, one of the greatest artists of that or of any age, was so carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, as to bring his life-academy studies to be consumed on this pyre, forgetful that, in the absence of such studies, he could never himself have risen above low mediocrity, nor such painters as Raphael and Michael Angelo ever have been trained to glory. Lorenzo

di Credi, like himself a devoted follower of Savonarola, did the same.

Had the books which swelled the flames been such as were unquestionably demoralising, public censure could only have been applied to the mode in which they had been obtained; but the same blind zeal appears to have presided over the selection, as in the case of many of the works of art.

It was thus that a man of great learning and lofty eloquence, full of zeal also for the glory of God, and for the highest interests of humanity, was betrayed by monkish extravagance into an indiscriminating warfare against taste and genius. The pile thus constructed was set fire to by the enthusiastic procession, amidst hymns and acclamations; and its value may be judged of by the fact that a merchant of Venice offered to purchase the whole at the price of 20,000 crowns.

It was impossible but that such outrages as these on common sense and right reason should lower their author in the judgment of the discerning part of the public The political power of Savonarola became henceforth still more on the wane, and his enemies took fresh courage. But his own strength of resolution suffered no abatement, and nothing could daunt his determination to stand forth, in the front of danger and of death, as the resolute champion of Church reforms and the denouncer of papal immorality.*

* Perrens, Sav. vol. i. cap. 6.

On the 12th of May, 1497, the pope put forth a thundering excommunication against him, terming him a heretic and a son of perdition. When this act was published in Florence, it produced great public excitement, and the question of its validity was hotly canvassed; many high authorities declaring it to be invalid, in consequence of irregularity in form. For some months after its arrival, Savonarola abstained from preaching, but, at length, under the renewed sanction of the seignory, he recommenced in the cathedral, and also published an able and eloquent tract, entitled the "Triumph of the Cross." The archiepiscopal Vicar of Florence now threatened to excommunicate all who should attend his preaching. The seignory, on the other hand, banished the vicar. They also again addressed the pope in his vindication, and two hundred members of the fraternity of San Marco did the same in a respectful but spirited address. He himself boldly maintained the invalidity of the act, and ably answered all the charges preferred against him. The pope signified his readiness to withdraw it, if he would appear at Rome, and submit to a trial; but he was too wary to court in this way certain destruction. In the meantime the storm thickened around Savonarola: democratic sway was becoming every day less popular in Florence, and the party of the Medici held up their heads with confidence. One of their avowed supporters had been chosen Presi-

sident of the Great Council in the year 1496, and their partisans, together with those of the court of Rome, had ever, since been indefatigable in their efforts to undermine Savonarola's influence. The success of their efforts became every day more evident; and, from this time to the close of his eventful career, he found himself placed on the defensive, instead of riding triumphant, as had been the case for more than three years, on the waves of popular favour. The series of his Sermons mark these vicissitudes, and unfold, from time to time, the facts of his personal history. In those of Advent 1493, on the text "Quam bonus Israel Deus," his zeal energetically breaks forth in protesting manfully against the corruptions of the Church and of the world, and in unfolding the sublime glories of the Gospel of Christ. Those of 1494, on the book of Job, and some other parts of Scripture, are in the same spirit; but it will be found, on examining the series upon the prophet Amos, delivered during the year 1496, and those upon Ezekiel, in the Lent of the following year, when his power was on the decline, that the dignity and the persuasive charity of the minister of Christ are too often converted into the defying tone, nay, not seldom, the *rant* of the politician.

The year 1497 was fraught with confusion and terror throughout Florence.

"Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago."

The trial, and finally, as already related, the decapitation of the five citizens; the ravages of the plague, an event which the followers of Savonarola imagined was to be found among his predictions; his excommunication by the pope, and the fierce debates ensuing upon it, kept the city in a perpetual state of fierce excitement and controversy.

The year 1498 was ushered in by a seignory the majority of whom were friends of Savonarola. They invited him, in defiance of the papal excommunication, to renew his preachings, and they even received the eucharist from his hand. He now commenced his last and most remarkable course of Sermons, on the book of Exodus, in the course of which he entered, as it were, into direct collision with the pope, in a spirit which seemed to proclaim that in this contest he would conquer or die. In the course of his comments he denounced more pointedly than ever the vices of the sovereign pontiff. A new mistress, Giulia Bella, had, for some time, absorbed Alexander's affections. In the course of the year 1497 she had presented him with a son, and had been paraded in public, and made conspicuous at various church ceremonies. He alludes in the following terms to these startling facts, in the twelfth of his Sermons on the said book. "We no longer hear in high quarters of my *nephews* and *nieces*, but of my little *son* and my little *daughter*. Women of ill fame are paraded in St. Peter's; every priest has his concubine; they sin

in open day-light; and this poison is so generally diffused, that every thing about them is envenomed. There is so much of this poison at Rome that it has infected the whole world: it is diffused in France, in Germany, and everywhere. How is this to end? since all is pollution and poison." * But even this scandal was outdone by another, which occurred a few months later in the papal family. His eldest son, the Duke of Gandia, had been assassinated on the 14th of June 1497, in the streets of Rome, and this murder was generally attributed to his brother Cæsar Borgia, instigated, it was asserted, by feelings of jealousy against him as his rival in a most flagitious amour. Alluding to these various events, and to the recent act of excommunication, "I am called," said Savonarola, "in a document from Rome, a son of perdition. My reply to this papal denunciation is, He whom you thus reprobate is not one who assorts with profligates, and keeps concubines, but who entirely devotes himself to preaching the faith of Christ. Mine are *spiritual* sons and daughters. They receive my doctrines, they confess regularly, they communicate habitually, they walk uprightly. My great object is to exalt the Church of Christ; *that* of my calumniators is to ruin it."

On another occasion, defending himself against the charge of contumacy, he said, "I am charged

* Sermon xii. sup. Exod. p. 143. Edit. Venet. 1540.

with opposing myself to ecclesiastical authority. This is quite untrue. When supreme authority is employed, as it now is, to ruin the Church, it is not ecclesiastical, but Satanical power that is at work. Yes; when it lends itself to patronise harlots, profligates, and robbers; when it persecutes the just, and insidiously exerts itself to corrupt and undermine Christian virtue, it becomes —I repeat it—infernal and Satanical power."

Again, in reply to a similar charge: "You tell me I am lowering ecclesiastical authority. It is no such thing. My desire is to act under such power, lawfully constituted; and to aid in upholding it: but I cannot pay homage to infernal and Satanical power." *

About this time appeared on the scene an enthusiastic advocate of the late papal proceedings, Francesco de Pouilles. He severely attacked Savonarola from the pulpit, and zealously defended the act of excommunication. The great body of

* The following are his words in one of these passages. "Voglio stare sotto la potesta ecclesiastica, e così mi sottometto me; e tutto quello che ho sempre detto alla corretione della Romana Chiesa e della potestà ecclesiastica — voglio star sotto quella, non già sotto la potestà infernale e non sotto la potestà diabolica."—*Predica* 22. p. 263. 12mo. Venet. 1540.

The last sermon which he preached beyond the precincts of S. Marco, was in March, 1498. On this occasion he graphically described, under a feigned name, the profligate life, habits, and manners, of the sovereign pontiff. He then denounced coming wars on Rome and on Italy, and finished by anticipating the approaching tragedy of his own death.

the Romish clergy in Florence urged him on to further opposition; and their numerous partisans, together with those of the exiled family, now felt themselves sufficiently strong in public opinion to provoke a disgraceful riot against Savonarola, within the walls of the cathedral, on Ascension Day. On this occasion, a set of profane wretches entered the church early in the morning, and placed a stuffed ass's skin within or above the pulpit, sprinkling, at the same time, the most filthy excrements over the pavement.

These were all removed by the zeal of his partisans before the service commenced; and he was calmly proceeding with his sermon, when indications of tumult became manifest in the congregation; and, in spite of every effort to restore order, they so increased that it was deemed prudent for him to quit the pulpit; when a body-guard of his friends rallied around him, and he was escorted home by them in safety to San Marco.

In this extremity, he addressed letters to the emperor, to the kings of England and France, and to the king and queen of Spain; exhorting them to convoke a general council, before whom he bound himself to prove that Alexander VI. was no true pope, and no Christian, because he had gained his election by simony and bribery, and because he was stained with the guilt of such foul crimes as unfitted him for all ecclesiastical functions. On these grounds he justified his own apparent con-

tumacy, and bold defiance of the papal brief; and proclaimed that the Church of Christ was without any legal head. An agent of the Duke of Milan, having intercepted one of these letters, transmitted it to Rome, and the pope instantly put forth a bull, menacing Florence with his vengeance unless his former decrees were instantly obeyed.

As interdict and excommunication were now suspended over Florence, a mandate was issued by the seignory, imposing silence on Savonarola; and De Pouilles followed this up by publicly challenging him, in the church of Santa Croce, to test with him the validity of the papal excommunication by an appeal to the ordeal of fire. In that age of superstition and ferocity, the insane folly of such a test was not generally felt. It enlisted in its favour the zeal of an excitable people, familiar with the miraculous pretensions of Romanism; and it was approved by the pope, who, anticipating mischief from it in some way or other to Savonarola, pronounced it to be a proposition worthy of the best days of the Church. Thus acted upon, even the seignory, strange as it may appear, declared in its favour. But Savonarola from first to last was opposed to it; and though he at length yielded a reluctant assent, it was only because a large number of his most devoted followers, catching the growing enthusiasm, were numbered among its advocates. In fact, but for the temerity of one of his own disciples, who publicly offered to accept De Pouilles'

challenge, the whole matter would have died away. De Pouilles, upon this, shrunk from his offer, and declared that he would accept of no substitute. A remarkable rivalry then commenced. Two other Franciscan monks, Pilli and Rondinelli, eagerly offered themselves in the place of De Pouilles; and a multitude of monks, priests, women, and even children, contended for the honour of going through the ordeal for Savonarola. He would most gladly have stopped this new movement, but the seignory interposed, and decreed that the ordeal should take place; that Pescia and Rondinelli should go through it; and that the ensuing 7th of April, 1498, should be the day. Combustible materials were piled up to a great height in the Piazza dei Signori, now Gran Duca, in two separate rows, leaving a narrow path of two feet only between them, along which the rival challengers were to walk after the furnace was lighted.

When the day arrived, public excitement had risen to the highest pitch. The Piazza was so thronged with spectators that even the windows, balconies, and roofs of the houses were crowded. The multitude looked on, awe-struck at the dreadful preparations. About mid-day Domenico Pescia came to the spot, clad in sacerdotal vestments, bearing in a crystal vase the consecrated wafer, followed by Savonarola, and a long train of Dominican monks, carrying red crosses and singing hymns. The Franciscans soon appeared escorting

Rondinelli, silent, and without ceremony. Expectation stood in horror, when suddenly the Franciscans interposed delay, declaring that they would never allow Pescia to carry the sacrament, at the risk of its being consumed, into the flames. Savonarola, who superstitiously placed great reliance upon it as a safeguard, inflexibly refused to yield to the objection. New difficulties were then raised by the Franciscans, in discussing which whole hours passed away. At length twilight came on, and with it came so soaking a rain, that it quickly dispersed the multitude, and rendered the two piles incombustible. The populace went off full of ill humour. Disappointment had succeeded to enthusiasm, and Savonarola sunk greatly in their esteem.

He was insulted in his way back to San Marco; and the waves of popular resentment, swelled by the arts of his enemies, rose so high on the ensuing day, that a terrible tumult broke forth in the church of San Marco while he was preaching; when one of his friends was killed in front of the altar. Before the evening closed, the convent was besieged by a ferocious mob, and the houses of many of his adherents were plundered. The arrest of Savonarola, Pescia, and others, was now decreed by the seignory. The partisans of the Medici, and of the Romish court, aided by the popular voice, had become ascendant in the councils of the

government. The officers of police found him in the beautiful library of San Marco, surrounded by the fraternity; and to this day the very spot is pointed out, with deep interest, where he stood, on yielding himself up a prisoner.

A messenger was instantly dispatched to Rome, announcing his arrest. The incensed pontiff would fain have had him committed to his own hands, for special punishment; but this the seignory refused; and at length he satisfied himself with dispatching two judges, *so called*, to Florence, who left Rome with a strict charge on no account to fail in compassing his condemnation. These hirelings, assisted by the seignory, formed the tribunal before whom he went through the mockery of a trial.

There was no fair hearing of witnesses; no appeal to real facts; no opportunity given for explanation or defence. Torture was the instrument employed to force from him such avowals of guilt as were deemed needful to effect the purpose of his enemies. It had been barbarously applied to him before the tribunal sat, and it was now mercilessly renewed. His feeble constitution and irritable nerves sunk under the anguish of its infliction, and various admissions against himself were thus wrung from him, which he disavowed as soon as the torture was suspended. Upon this the torture was repeated. Again the admissions and disavowals

followed. And such, he declared, should be the case, so long as he was thus cruelly treated*; adding how deeply he lamented that insufferable pain should for a moment suspend his constancy.

He passed a month in prison with the daily anticipation of a violent death. No friend was allowed to approach him. If, at times, faith and hope gave way to despondency, they quickly resumed their empire, enduing him with fortitude and peace. What his inward conflicts were, and whence he derived comfort and support, he has recorded in touching expositions of two Psalms, the 31st and 51st, composed during his imprisonment, with special reference to his own afflicting circumstances. Luther, who greatly honoured the memory of Savonarola, and in a certain sense deemed him his precursor, translated and published these Expositions, and offered a tribute of high esteem and commendation to his memory.

The sentence passed upon him was that he should be strangled and then burnt. A similar sentence was passed upon two of his disciples, Pescia and Maraffi Sylvestre. On the 23rd of May, 1498, it was carried into effect in the very same place in which the abortive attempt at the ordeal by fire had been made five weeks before. After the bodies of all three were consumed, their ashes were cast into the Arno. Some few relics of the holy monk

* Picus Miran. Vit. Sav. p. 77. Scipione Ammirato, lib. 27.

were carefully gathered up and reverentially preserved by his devoted followers.

The deportment of Savonarola was perfectly calm and composed. Before leaving the prison he communicated, pouring forth his soul in prayer with devout fervour.

To his confessor, who asked for his last commands, he said, "Pray for me, and tell my friends not to be discouraged at my death, but to continue stedfast in my doctrine, and to live in peace."

After all three were attached to the pile, the Bishop Pagagnotti, addressing Savonarola, declared that he separated him from the Church. "You may separate me," he replied, "from the Church militant," implying that he could not sever him from the Church triumphant.

Thus perished, in his forty-sixth year, by a cruel and unjust sentence, Girolamo Savonarola, a Reformer, as he has significantly been called, before the Reformation.

Various and opposite opinions have been put forth concerning this extraordinary man. The wonderful powers of his eloquence; his untiring zeal and energy as a preacher; his life of self-denial and charity; his irreproachable moral character; the ascendancy which he acquired over others by the force of his talents; and the moral reform produced in Florence through his labours and influence, are all matters of history. The expulsion of the Medici from Florence in the year 1494, un-

expectedly invested him with great political power. Called upon by his fellow-citizens to act as one of their envoys to Charles VIII., and afterwards to take a leading part in reconstructing their ancient republic, he may be regarded as the principal author of the constitution then adopted. He knew what it was to govern a convent according to a fixed code of discipline; but he knew very little of the busy world, and of the difficulty of wisely adapting political institutions to the special wants and the peculiar circumstances of a whole people. His scheme will always excite curiosity and interest, as one of the earliest attempts, in modern times, to establish constitutional government upon the basis of popular representation; but it was in many respects crude and ill digested, and by no means adapted to unite and harmonise the jarring interests of the nobility and commonalty of Florence. It therefore contained within itself the seeds of its own dissolution.

After the new government was established, his authority and opinion were greatly deferred to; and his favourite object was to render Florence a centre of moral rectitude and political freedom. But here his monkish strictness and ascetic tastes betrayed him into the error of unwisely and injudiciously interfering with the liberty of private judgment, and of attempting to enforce religious principles and observances by an approach to coercive measures.

The principal charge alleged against him by

Bayle and others has been his pretension to prophetic light, assumed, as they maintain, for furthering his projects of personal ambition. That he did believe himself thus supernaturally enlightened is true, and striking specimens of the fervid fancy and hardihood with which he gave utterance to his thoughts at such times have been quoted. But his prophetic denunciations were always subservient to the one great end of his preaching,—reformation of the Church, and general reformation of manners. His pretensions of this kind may expose him to the charge of fanatical delusion, but not of wilful imposture. Any such charge is refuted by the whole tenor of his life and character. At the same time it must be acknowledged that on various occasions he was driven to great shifts to reply to the charges brought against him of being a false prophet.

Brought up in a Church which maintains that miraculous gifts still exist within her communion, there is no cause for wonder (considering his highly imaginative temperament) that he thought himself endowed with one of these gifts. From his early youth the crying sins and corruptions of the age had weighed heavily upon his mind, and he beheld in them the sure prognostics of coming judgments. Penetrated with this conviction, he regarded the political changes of the world as the instruments of their infliction; and, in particular, he thought he saw their forecast shadows in the French invasion of Italy under Charles VIII.

These topics possessed both his dreaming and waking thoughts; and his excited fancy was peopled with picturesque images of their speedy accomplishment. Thus it was that he, at times, gave utterance to these highly wrought impressions in prophetic denunciations, delivered in the most positive and precise terms.

It is not strange that he should have himself believed that he spoke under divine inspiration on such occasions; but it does seem so that, in spite of the obvious failure of his predictions, so many eminent men among his contemporaries regarded and continued to regard him as a prophet.

Had Savonarola, instead of denouncing the corruptions of the Romish Church, found a vent for his zeal in some mode accordant with her interests; had he, for example, like St. Bruno, founded a rigid religious order, in strict subordination to her system of government; had his lofty enthusiasm in any such way been exerted in her cause; he would have been lauded and perhaps even canonised by her as a saint, instead of being condemned and executed as a heretic. Even his prophetic visions might probably, in this case, have been adopted and placed by her on a par with the spiritual reveries and visions of Catherine of Siena and other pious enthusiasts.

But Savonarola, in this case, would not have ranked, as he now justly does, foremost among the Christian heroes of the fifteenth century. Casting

away all desires of secular advancement, he stood forth, single and unsupported, in the spirit of the ancient prophets, the bold reprover of the vices of the age in which he lived, and of the corruptions of the Church; especially of the shameless profligacy of him who was its papal head at the close of his career, and whom he pointed to in his sermons as no Vicar of Jesus Christ, but the Minister of Satan.

The principal drawback to his reputation is his having given in any degree his sanction to that outrage upon reason, the ordeal by fire. It proves that a strong tinge of fanatical superstition was blended with his great qualities of mind and heart.

But, though Savonarola was a remarkable witness and champion of the purity and truth of the Christian Revelation in an age of gross venality and unblushing crime, he had no claim to be regarded as a reformer of the Church in any such sense as had a Wickliffe or a Luther. In some respects he approximated to the doctrinal principles of the Reformation, more especially in the article of Justification; but in the main he was what he professed to be, a devoted, (and we may well add,) a most devout son of the Roman Catholic Church. Abundant evidence in proof of this is supplied by his numerous publications, replete, in spite of great drawbacks on the score of monkish superstition, and frequent want of judgment, with learning, eloquence, and piety.

Luther commenced his career in the spirit of Savonarola, by indignantly attacking the sale of indulgences, as an insult to reason and to God. Had he stopped here, his reformation, like Savonarola's, would have died with him. But as his enquiries enlarged, he gradually came, on just grounds of argument and evidence, to the conclusion, that the doctrines of papal supremacy and infallibility have no foundation in scripture, or in reason, and that the system of priestly domination, built upon them, is a monstrous usurpation upon liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment. At the same time, his example proves, that he deemed a sober reverence for Christian antiquity a wise accompaniment of the exercise of this right.

By ably exposing the facts of this usurpation, and by further establishing the great antagonistic principle of Protestantism, that the Bible is the sole rule of faith, Luther enlisted on his side the champions of truth and reason in his own time, and in succeeding ages, and won for himself an imperishable name.

He also restored to the Church a fundamental dogma, which had been almost lost sight of amidst the perversions of scholastic theology, the doctrine that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine, taught by Christ himself and by his apostles, forms a prominent feature in the Confessions and Articles of the Protestant Churches; and, while it opens the

door of immortal hope to the true believer, is the most potent principle of moral renovation which can be brought to bear upon the powers of the mind and of the heart.

In the above summary, it is hoped that the lights and shades of Savonarola's character are fairly portrayed. More than three centuries have passed away since his eloquent tongue became silent in death. Infamy brands the name of his persecutor Alexander VI.; but such became the general conviction of his own just claim to public veneration, that, within ten years after his death, the pencil of Raphael was employed by Pope Julius II. to introduce his portrait among the Saints and Doctors of the Church in his celebrated picture, entitled the Dispute of the Sacrament. Even at this day, his name is fragrant in the traditional memory of the Florentine population, and strangers who visit the convent of San Marco are conducted to his cell, as to the once hallowed abode of a saint and confessor.

We cannot part from Savonarola without noticing the powerful influence which he exercised upon some of the most eminent artists of his day, as also his high appreciation of the beauties of Art.

With an imagination so vivid and picturesque, it could hardly have been otherwise; but, in strict consistency with the main objects of his life and labours, he zealously opposed the growing influence of what he termed Paganism in Art.

Though he could not question the obvious beau-

ties of the various models of ancient sculpture open to the study of the Florentine artists, he regarded them, as he did the great writers of classical antiquity, with jealous apprehension, lest they should communicate to their admirers tastes opposed to the purity of the Christian vocation. He also censured, with severity, those artists who painted the face of the Virgin Mary after living models, instead of strictly conforming to the types of the early Italian Church.

Some of the most devoted of his partisans were artists and their families; and among them was to be found, as we have already stated, the great name of Frà Bartolomeo. Early in life, he became a convert of Savonarola, and from that time consecrated his pencil almost exclusively to religious subjects. So deeply was he affected by his tragical death, that for a time he renounced his art, and assumed the religious habit in the convent of Prato. Thence he removed to that of San Marco, where the entreaties of his friends and superiors induced him to resume his enchanting pencil. Its productions became increasingly attractive after the year 1504, in consequence of the influence produced upon his own genius by association with that of the youthful Raphael; who, on the other hand, is said to have profited by studying the harmony and richness of the Frà's colouring and the magic of his clair-obscur. At a later period of life he visited Rome, attracted thither by what he heard of the wonders of the

SAVONAROLA.

BORN 1452 _ DIED 1498.

Sistine ceiling, and of the halls of the Vatican. From that time, his art rose to a still higher grade, and he painted apostles and evangelists which rivalled in grandeur those of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

Lorenzo de Credi was another eminent painter, who was a devotee of Savonarola. Educated in the school of Andrea Verrochio, and the friend of Leonardo da Vinci and Pietro Perugino, his pictures are distinguished by a depth of devotion and a purity of feeling, which, in spite of a certain mediocrity of drawing, stamps on them no common interest.

Luca della Robbia, whose name is celebrated for his dramatic and devotional sentiment in Art, and for the fine porcelain in which his productions are usually executed; Andrea della Robbia, also, his nephew and pupil; together with many other members of that gifted family, were disciples and friends of Savonarola. So also was Giovanni delle Corniole, so called from his many beautiful cameos executed in Cornelian, one of the finest of which is the head of Savonarola, reputed to be the best likeness existing of him. The architect, Cronaca, also, who crowned the Strozzi Palace at Florence with its superb cornice, was so deeply attached to him, and so fondly cherished his memory, that Vasari tells us, he was sure, on whatever subject he might begin to talk with his friends, to end with Savonarola.

It was a natural consequence of the ascendency which he thus exercised upon his adherents, that their art should betray not a little of his own monkish tastes. Accordingly, we find legendary and superstitious subjects abounding among them. The first, and certainly the noblest example of a school of scriptural historical painting in which the grand ideal is united with the truth of nature, is to be found in the cartoons of Raphael.

Michael Angelo's good sense and mental independence raised him far above any of the extravagances of Savonarola; but though incapable of sympathising with him in this respect, he admired his eloquence, took pleasure in his writings, and shared in his love of civil freedom: and on hearing from Leone Leoni* that he was about to execute his medal, he suggested that a suitable inscription for the reverse would be,—"I will teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." *Docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertentur.* (Ps. li.)

We cannot better close this chapter than by the following tribute to his memory, from the pen of one of the most elegant Latin poets of modern times, the amiable Marco Flaminio:—

"Dum fera flamma tuos, Hieronyme, pascitur artus,
Religio sanctas dilaniata comas,
Flevit, et O, dixit, crudeles parcite flammas,
Parcite; sunt isto viscera nostra rogo."

* Avvertimento alla Ediz. delle Pred. di Sav. Firenze, 1845, 8vo. p. vi.

CHAPTER IX.

MICHAEL ANGELO, ON HIS RETURN FROM BOLOGNA, EXECUTES VARIOUS WORKS IN SCULPTURE. — HIS FIRST VISIT TO ROME, AND OCCASION OF IT. — EXECUTES HIS BACCHUS, AND THE GROUP OF THE PIETÀ NOW IN ST. PETER'S.

1495–6.

We will now proceed to describe the artistic pursuits and labours of Michael Angelo, after his return from Bologna to Florence, at the troubled period to which the last chapter has reference.

One of the first works which he undertook was a small statue of St. John, for Lorenzo, son of Piero Francesco de' Medici; and the next was a Cupid, of the natural size, about which and its final fate there are various and somewhat contradictory statements. It was executed for a Milanese gentleman, of the name of Balthasar. Vasari tells us, that such was its grace and fine finish, that it was suggested to the possessor that it would readily pass for an antique, if a slight appearance of age were imparted to its surface.

Balthasar, it is added, acted on the hint, and then sent it to Rome, where it was sold as such to

the Cardinal Giorgio di Riario, who valued himself on his connoisseurship. His Eminence had not long rejoiced in his acquisition when rumours of the real truth became current, and, impelled by curiosity and mortified vanity, he employed an agent at Florence to see the reputed sculptor, and not only to inquire into the facts, but to ascertain, by an inspection of his works, whether he was capable of producing so beautiful a figure. Michael Angelo easily convinced his visitor that he had been no party to the fraud; but it was not so easy to impart to him an adequate notion of his powers, as at this time he had no important work in progress.

He therefore, with a few powerful and expressive strokes of his pen, delineated a hand and wrist, in a style so spirited, that the agent felt himself to be in the presence of no ordinary artist; and, using a discretion entrusted to him, invited him to visit Rome, and to become the guest of the cardinal. The invitation was so cordially pressed home, that it was gladly accepted, and became the occasion of Michael Angelo's first sight of a city in which he was destined to establish, by his great works, an imperishable fame. His reception was friendly; and though Riario was a man of no real taste, and did not himself employ his guest's chisel or pencil, they both soon found adequate employment in other quarters.

The fine specimens of Grecian sculpture, together with the stately ruins and the picturesque remains

of imperial grandeur, which impart such high interest to Rome, must have stirred up, in such a mind as his, feelings of delight and admiration.

How ardently must he have participated in the zeal called forth about this time in excavating ancient statues from the ruins of baths, temples, and villas; and with what delight must he have surveyed the fresh wonders of art which were thus continually brought to light from their deep recesses! He spent about two years in Rome, and during this time produced various works of high excellence, chiefly in sculpture.

The cartoon of a St. Francis receiving the stigmata, mentioned by Vasari, as having been painted or designed for one of Riario's dependants, appears to have been only a slight work thrown off in moments of relaxation from severer labours.

His first production was a Cupid; and he afterwards undertook a statue of Bacchus for Jacopo Galli, a Roman gentleman. The Bacchus now forms one of the ornaments of the Florentine Gallery. This statue does not represent Bacchus in the character in which ancient sculpture so often portrays him, as the rapt, inspired leader of mystic orgies, and as the hero of classical romance, but in the grosser form of the god of the vintage, and of its jocund festivities. The expression of the face is sensual; the limbs are plump; a slight inclination of the head, and the general attitude, convey the idea of inebriety. In his right hand is a cup,

from which he appears about to drink, and on which his eyes are complacently fixed. A garland of vine-leaves encircles his temples; and a tiger's skin, an animal sacred to Bacchus, hangs over his left arm, the hand of which grasps a bunch of grapes, which a boyish Satyr, placed at his feet, is waggishly devouring. The boy is as playful a figure, in marble, as any of the Cupids which grace the pictures of Correggio. In drawing, in anatomical truth, and in finish, this statue is in the style of the Greeks; but, from the above description, it will be readily understood, that in sentiment and expression it is scarcely worthy of the lofty genius of Michael Angelo. We conclude that the subject was imposed upon him by his employer; and that, as a youthful artist, seeking patronage, he could not have his own way. Its masterly execution, however, secured him at once so high a reputation, that he was soon after applied to by the Cardinal de St. Denys, ambassador from Charles VIII. to the Roman court, to undertake a composition, in sculpture, for the French chapel of St. Petronilla, in the ancient St. Peter's. The celebrated Pietà, which now adorns the first right-hand chapel on entering the great door of the modern St. Peter's, was the result of this commission. It consists of two figures, the Virgin mother, seated in a dignified attitude, and supporting on her knees a dead Christ, whom she regards with inexpressible reverence, tenderness, and grief. Her sorrow is profoundly mental, with-

out any distortion of the features. Meekness and benignity characterise the features of the Christ: the body is somewhat meagre, but its anatomical and plastic truth is admirable. The drapery has been criticised as somewhat stiff; and it must be acknowledged that the style of the whole group partakes of the rigidity of the early school of painting and sculpture.

This, however, must have been intentional, since the style of the Bacchus, its predecessor, has all the freedom and breadth of the most advanced stage of Art. Possibly, this difference was the consequence of a qualified accommodation of his own manner to the conventional mode, yet prevalent, of treating such subjects.

The finish of the whole work is exquisite, especially the body of the Christ, in which respect it differs greatly from the unlaboured freedom and force of his later works, bespeaking the assiduous application of a rising artist. He was now in his twenty-fifth year.

Nothing could exceed the celebrity which this great work immediately attached to his name. It was the theme of universal admiration. Poets celebrated its merits, artists multiplied studies from it, and Michael Angelo was henceforth regarded as the first of living sculptors.

Modern criticism has taken a middle course between this high appreciation of its merits, and the detracting tone of certain later censors. More

freedom and breadth of manner would have heightened its effect; but its touching pathos, its dignified conception, and its masterly execution, are incontestable. In its present position, it is placed far too much above the level of the eye, to allow of its beauties being duly appreciated.*

A current criticism, coeval with its first appearance, was the too youthful aspect of the Virgin, as compared with the indications of age in the Christ.

The artist's own reply to the censure is recorded by Condivi, and it was as follows:—"Is it not obvious that the impress of youth would naturally be of long duration in a virgin pure and uncontaminate? whereas, traces of premature age would no less naturally be visible in the frame of the Man of Sorrows; of Him who assumed our suffering nature, and was subject to all the trials of humanity, sin only excepted."

The name of the artist, contrary to his usual practice, is inscribed on the girdle of the Virgin. He is said to have added it in consequence of overhearing the group ascribed, by some Milanese people, while viewing it, to one of their own countrymen.

* One of the first sculptors of the present day, our fellow-countryman, Gibson, expressed himself to me, in the year 1853, at Rome, in high admiration of this group; and especially of the exquisite and masterly drawing and finish of the arms and hands of the Christ; adding his regret that it was placed too high to produce its due effect.

CHAPTER X.

MICHAEL ANGELO REVISITS FLORENCE. — EXECUTES HIS DAVID. — PAINTS A HOLY FAMILY FOR ANGELO DONI. — DESIGNS THE FAMOUS CARTOON OF PISA IN COMPETITION WITH LEONARDO DA VINCI. — A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LATTER ARTIST. — RESPECTIVE MERITS OF THE TWO CARTOONS.

1502 TO 1504.

THE fame of the great works in sculpture, executed by Michael Angelo at Rome, quickly pervaded Florence, whose citizens felt not a little proud of the honour reflected upon their School of Art in his person. This sentiment naturally prompted a very general wish that he should be requested to execute a group, or a statue, for the embellishment of the city which claimed him as her own. The mode of paying him this compliment was quickly devised, but in a less liberal spirit than the occasion demanded. A great block of marble had long lain neglected in the court of the Palazzo Vecchio, out of which Simone de Fiesole, a sculptor of very moderate ability, had in former years undertaken to produce a colossal statue; but, after inflicting much injury on it, he had, finally, in despair of success, abandoned the attempt. It was now proposed that Michael Angelo should be requested to

extract a statue out of this mutilated marble. The Gonfaloniere Soderini, who had previously thought of applying to Leonardo da Vinci, or Contucci, for the same purpose, was foremost among the civic authorities who pressed the commission on Michael Angelo. He came, in consequence, to Florence; and, in spite of the injured condition of the block, he assented to their wishes, prompted, perhaps, by the youthful ambition of proving his power of coping with difficulties which to many would have appeared insuperable. The result was the colossal statue of David, which now stands in the open air in front of the Palazzo Vecchio.

It is called by Condivi a giant, but Vasari, and Benvenuto Cellini, who mentions it in his Autobiography, both refer to it as a David; and there is no doubt that such was the intention of the artist, for, in more than one of his drawings, this figure is introduced in a somewhat different attitude from the existing statue, with the head of a Goliath beneath its feet. It may be inferred from these drawings that his wish was to have introduced this appropriate accompaniment, and to have imparted more of action to the statue; but that he found it impossible, in consequence of the want of due compass in the marble. To the same cause is to be ascribed a slight appearance of contraction in the chest of the figure. What specially denotes it to be a David is a sling over one of the shoulders; it might otherwise pass for a youthful Hector or Achilles. The head of

Goliath, from his potent chisel, would not only have identified it as a David, but have doubtless proved a miracle of Art. In spite of these disadvantages, the result is a truly grand statue. Its simple, yet noble attitude and bearing; its plastic feeling; its muscular energy; the learned precision and force of its anatomical development; the beauty of the hyacinthine locks, which cluster round a forehead and countenance expressive of youthful courage, lofty enterprise, and guileless truth, place it high among the finest works of modern sculpture. How often have I surveyed it with admiration under every variety of light and shadow, and in every direction; and how often have I come to the conclusion that, with the exception of the Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini, none of the adjacent statues rival it in the highest qualities of Art! * The Hercules and Cacus of Baccio Bandinelli, for instance, is spiritless as compared with it: Hercules strangles his victim with apathy; and Cacus, while being squeezed to death, betrays no agony.

Yet Bandinelli flattered himself that the David would be little thought of after his group was placed beside it. The public voice undeceived him. One and another stinging satire apprised him how

* Again to quote Mr. Gibson's opinion, he remarked of the David nearly as follows: — "What a fine statue is the David! how grand the spirit, and how perfect the execution; and how free the whole from the mannerism into which Michael Angelo afterwards degenerated!"

signal was his failure. Among them was the following. It is Cacus who speaks.

> "Ercole non mi dar, che i tuoi vitelli
> Ti renderò con tutto il tuo bestiame;
> Ma il bue l' ha avuto Baccio Bandinelli."

It is often expedient, on public occasions, to humour the little caprices of self-important but amiable functionaries. A pleasant anecdote of this kind is told of the gonfaloniere Pietro Soderini. When, on the appointed day, the ceremonial of elevating the statue into its proper position had been gone through in the presence of a vast crowd of spectators, Michael Angelo himself superintended the removal of the guard-boards. Soderini, who was at this moment just beneath the statue, expressed himself as perfectly enchanted:—"There is, however," he added, "one slight defect, which can easily be corrected,—the nose is rather too thick." Michael Angelo saw that the worthy magistrate was so placed as to be incapable of really judging of this feature, but, as there was no time for discussion, he seemed to assent to the criticism, and catching up, unperceived, some marble dust, and mounting a temporary bridge on the side of the statue, affected to work lightly on the nose with a file, letting fall at the same moment some of the dust in his hand on the head of Soderini. He then called out, "How does it look now?" "I am perfectly satisfied," replied the gonfaloniere.

"You have actually imparted life to it." The artist descended quite as much pleased with the success of his stratagem, as the worthy functionary with his own critical discernment. According to Vasari, he next executed a bronze statue of David for Soderini, which was sent into France. Condivi mentions the statue, but not the subject. The correctness of both statements is questioned, as it has never been heard of in any collection. A bronze of David and Goliath is also referred to by Condivi, which is equally unknown.

Two circular bas-reliefs, one for Taddeo Taddi, the other for Bartolomeo Pitti, but afterwards presented to Luigi Guicciardini, are referred by Vasari to this period, but without any mention of the subjects. They appear to have been left unfinished; but as other bas-reliefs by him exist in the same condition, it is not possible correctly to distinguish between them. There is a very fine one of a Virgin and Child, in the Florentine Gallery, answering to this description; and another, still finer, was brought over to England by Sir George Beaumont, and presented to the Royal Academy. The last-named of these is a master-piece of sculpture, unfinished though it be. The figure and action of the infant Christ are allowed to be as fine as anything which the chisel of this great artist has produced.

One or two more works, on a small scale, in bronze or marble, are also referred to by Vasari and

Condivi, but in terms too vague to admit of their accurate identification.

About this time he painted a picture of a circular form, the subject a Holy Family, for Agnolo Doni. It now hangs in the Tribune of the Florentine Gallery, and is one of the very few paintings known to have entirely proceeded from his pencil. The Virgin is represented on her knees, and as leaning back in the act of receiving the infant Saviour from the lap of Joseph, who is behind her. The Child is finely drawn, and the picture exemplifies his power of placing his figures with perfect ease and correctness in the most difficult attitudes; but the expression of the Virgin is hard and unpleasing, her position is constrained, and the colouring, which has probably suffered much from age, is now dark and crude. It is executed in *distemper*. In the background are several small academical figures, admirably sketched, and placed there, it would seem, as playful exemplications of his power of design; certainly not as belonging to the subject.

Vasari tells us the picture, when finished, was sent to Doni by a special messenger, who was desired to bring back the sum of seventy ducats as its price. Doni, who was of a bargaining turn, said it was too much, and sent only forty ducats. Michael Angelo upon this desired the messenger to return immediately, and either to bring back the picture or a hundred ducats. Doni now trans-

mitted the first-named price of seventy ducats; but the inexorable artist still rose in his demands, and peremptorily required the return of the picture, or double the price he had at first named. Doni was afraid of making another move, and retained the picture by paying for it a hundred and forty ducats. The anecdote is an amusing proof of the artist's decision of character, and of his resolution to uphold the dignity of his profession.

The picture of the *Fates*, now in the Pitti Palace, was, till lately, confidently ascribed to him, but modern criticism has decided otherwise. It may probably have been painted from one of his designs, for the character and expression of these weird-sisters are not unworthy of his pencil,—keen, cunning, penetrating, relentless; but nothing can possibly be more unlike the strokes of his broad and vigorous brush than its execution, which is laboured, minute, and feeble. It is now pretty generally ascribed to Rosso Fiorentino.

Circumstances about this time occurred to place Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci, the two greatest masters of design that the modern world had seen, in honourable competition with each other; and the consequences emanating from it form a distinguished epoch in the history of Art.

It having been determined by the heads of the Florentine government, in the year 1503, to decorate the two opposite sides of their great council chamber in the Palazzo Vecchio with historical

paintings, they applied to Leonardo da Vinci, who happened then to be at Florence, and to Michael Angelo, to realise their intentions. In furtherance of this scheme, they were each to produce, in the first instance, a finished cartoon of the subject selected, and afterwards to execute it in painting on the wall of the council chamber.

Leonardo was born in the year 1452, and died in 1519. He was a Florentine by birth, and his first studies in Art were under Andrea Verrochio, who excelled both in painting and sculpture. So great was his proficiency, that Verocchio often employed him to work on his own pictures, and at length entrusted him to introduce into one of them—the subject being the Baptism of Christ—the figure of an angel beside one which he had just painted himself. The angel of Leonardo so far excelled his own in beauty and expression, that Verocchio, while he greatly admired it, felt chagrined at his obvious inferiority; and is said to have formed from that moment the resolution, from which he never departed, of abandoning an art in which he was so distanced by his highly gifted pupil.

Ludovico Sforza, regent, and afterwards duke of Milan, invited him to his court, A. D. 1490, and he there met with such encouragement that he became the founder of a school of painting in that city, which extended its influence over Northern Italy, and formed the genius of many able artists. At the time at which the competition above referred

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

BORN 1452_DIED 1519

to took place, he had passed his fiftieth year, and had long enjoyed all the honours which the homage of admiring contemporaries can confer on superior genius and eminent learning. He had already done much, by his example and influence, for the development of those principles on which the great school of Art is based, and which were carried to their highest perfection by his present rival, and by Raphael.

The genius of Leonardo, like that of Buonarroti, embraced the whole sphere of imagination and taste; for he was at once a painter, sculptor, architect, musician, and poet; and his powers of body, no less than of mind, were extraordinary. He was a great master of mechanical and anatomical science, and was accomplished in all manly and chivalrous exercises. While he imbibed the liveliest impressions from all that is objective in nature and in art, his works were replete with a refined elevation of sentiment and feeling which invests them with a peculiar interest. The deep impressions which he was capable of communicating to his pupils are attested by their works, which more or less faithfully reflect his own peculiar yet charming conceptions of beauty, and his graceful style of composition. Of his greatest work in painting, the Last Supper, in the refectory of the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, at Milan, only a faint shadow now exists, but in its perfection it must

have been a perfect work of Art.* The skill with which he has surmounted the difficulty of relieving a long straight line of figures from stiffness and monotony, the fine disposition of the various groups, the speaking physiognomy of their expression, and the sublime tenderness with which he has invested the features and the figure of the Saviour, are such as to leave nothing to desire in this composition but that it had been executed with more permanent colours, and that barbarism had less rudely invaded its remains.

Leonardo's colouring is rich and harmonious, his drawing grand, and his finish exquisite. In addition to his lofty qualities of mind, his person was signally handsome both in youth and old age, and he was an honoured and cherished guest in the highest circles of Italy and France. Michael Angelo, unlike his great competitor, was in the prime of youth; and, though his reputation was already high, his master-pieces of Art were as yet unachieved.

Thus placed, by a happy accident, in amicable rivalry, each selected, for the subject of his cartoon,

* A fine and highly finished copy of this grand work, from the pencil of his pupil, Marco d' Oggione, is in the possession of the Royal Academy in London; and there is a beautiful tapestry of it in the private apartments of the pope, in the palace of the Vatican.

The Royal Academy may also justly pride itself in the possession of a most beautiful cartoon, in black chalk, by Leonardo, the subject — a Holy Family.

popular incidents in the wars between Florence and Pisa. That fixed upon by Leonardo was an encounter of cavalry in the battle of Anghiari, A. D. 1440, which ended in the defeat of Piccinino, a general of F. M. Visconti, Duke of Milan. The cartoon has altogether perished; but a fragment of it, representing the furious encounter of four horsemen, was copied by Rubens, and engraved by Edelinck. The print is known by the name of the Battle of the Standard, the object of the competitors being, on the one side to capture, on the other to defend, their colours. The grand drawing, and the fire and spirit which pervade this fragment, may well make us deplore the loss of the whole composition. The horse was a most favourite animal with Da Vinci, and the subject was probably chosen to illustrate his power of delineating it in every variety of action.

The subject chosen by Michael Angelo had reference to an occurrence in the commencement of the same battle. A company of infantry, bathing in the Arno, are supposed suddenly to receive notice of the near approach of the enemy. All, in a moment, becomes movement and alarm. The scattered soldiers commingle; some have already dashed out of the water, others are just emerging from it; while many are hastily engaged in seizing their arms, or tearing on their clothes, or in helping their comrades to climb up the steep banks of the river: here and there, one and another are seen

completely armed; whilst a seated figure points with his finger in the direction of the enemy's approach.

Such a subject, in the hands of such an artist, became an occasion of conveying to the world of Art an incomparable lesson in the science of the Nude, displaying, as it did, the human figure in every form of movement, attitude, and foreshortening. The figures were of the size of life, and were drawn in black chalk, the shadows being in brown, and the lights in different degrees of white. Benvenuto Cellini, scarcely second to any one as an authority on questions of design, was one of the many artists who beheld and studied this great work, of which he speaks in the following terms.

After alluding to his own studies from it, and to the credit they had procured him, he adds: "While these cartoons thus hung opposite to each other, they formed the school of the world. Although the divine Michael Angelo afterwards painted the great chapel of Pope Julius, he never again fully realised the force of these, his earlier studies."*

The cartoon of Da Vinci, according to Cellini, was at first exhibited in a large apartment in the Medici Palace, and that of Michael Angelo in the hall of the Popes attached to S. Maria Novella. There is reason to believe that the former was

* Vita di Benvenuto Cellini, Firenze, 1832, p. 28, 29.

finished and exhibited for some time before that of Buonarroti. Vasari chiefly dwells on the extraordinary merits of the latter: he describes, in glowing terms, the admiration it excited, and the concourse of people who flocked to behold it, and of eminent artists who made studies from it, among whom were Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Baccio Bandinelli, Sansovino, Perino del Vaga, &c.

Here, for the first time, was seen the science of drawing in its perfection; in other words, the practical development of its fundamental principles, devoid of some considerable proficiency in which, what is called genius in Art cannot take a single step with confidence, nor attempt to embody the images of fancy without the danger of rendering itself ridiculous.

The science embodied in this cartoon went far beyond a masterly delineation of the several figures. It also exemplified the mode of rendering attitude, gesture, and movement subservient to the expression of mental emotion, while the effect of the whole was heightened by an almost sculptural degree of rounding and relief.

Neither of the eminent competitors, in this tournay of Art, ever realised the original intention of the Florentine government, by executing paintings from their respective designs. Leonardo is said to have commenced his in the great council-chamber, and to have made use of a peculiar process of colour in oil, which not answering, he abandoned the work.

The cartoon of Michael Angelo was finally removed from its first locality to the hall of the palace of the Medici, and placed opposite to that of Da Vinci. It disappeared during the troubles of Florence, in 1512. Baccio Bandinelli is accused of having destroyed it with impious hands, impelled by personal enmity to Michael Angelo, and by displeasure at its acknowledged superiority to the rival cartoon of Leonardo.

Vasari alludes, as follows, to this transaction:—

"In the year 1512, during the revolution which expelled the Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini, and recalled the Medici, Bandinelli, by means of a false key, introduced himself into the hall where this cartoon hung, and tore it in pieces. Some have pretended that he destroyed this *chef-d'œuvre* in order to possess himself of parts of the fragments; others maintained that he was anxious to deprive his younger rivals of the benefits which must accrue to them from studying this admirable work; while others say that his prompting motive was affection for Leonardo da Vinci, who now felt his reputation lowered: but those who best knew how to divine his intentions, attributed this action to the hatred with which throughout life he pursued the great Michael Angelo. It was an immense loss to the arts; and he was very generally accused of envy and malevolence."

This charge, which fastens such odious imputations on the memory of Bandinelli, has never been

refuted. Rossini, the historian of Italian art, adopts and repeats it; and the only fact that casts some degree of doubt upon it, is the silence of Condivi.

All that can be said respecting its final fate is, that fragments are known to have existed in different places, and in particular at Mantua, where they were long preserved with a sort of idolatrous reverence. From one of these fragments, Marc Antonio probably engraved the fine figures which go by the name of "Les Grimpeurs;" and a few more were engraved, with less effect, by Andrea Veneziano. Until the year 1808, no other record of this great work was supposed to exist; but a spirited engraving by Schiavonetti then appeared, from a picture in the collection at Holkham, purporting to include the whole composition. There is reason to suppose that such may be the case. The Holkham picture is possibly a study made from the cartoon at the time of its exhibition.*

Whether Raphael may justly be supposed to have first caught the inspiration of the grand style in Art from studying the cartoon of Pisa is a question which has led to much discussion. Vasari, in his anxiety to establish this point, falls into the gross error of fixing the date of Raphael's first visit to Florence as early as 1502, and of re-

* This picture was exhibited in the Gallery of the British Institution in the summer of 1856. It conveys no slight idea of the fervid energy and spirit of the original, and of the masterly precision of the drawing.

presenting him as setting off from Siena (where he had been aiding Pinturicchio with some fine designs for the great pictorial work which he was then carrying on in the library of the cathedral) for the express purpose of beholding the rival cartoons of Pisa. Now, it is an acknowledged fact, that Raphael did not make his first visit to Florence till 1504; and we have stated that the cartoon of Buonarroti was not publicly exhibited before the year 1506. The proofs of these facts are so well established, that it would only be making a parade of knowledge to go into the evidence. They bring home to Vasari a glaring anachronism; and they prove that Raphael's first acquirement of a nobler style of design preceded his acquaintance with the cartoon of Pisa by about two years. On coming to Florence, he enjoyed all the advantages of its Academy of Painting, and of its fine collection of Greek and Roman sculpture; he studied the works of Masaccio, and of Lorenzo Ghiberti; and he had the high privilege of an intimacy with Frà Bartolomeo, and probably of an acquaintance with Leonardo da Vinci.*

It was under these bright auspices that he commenced his career in Florence; and, as he did not leave it for Rome till the year 1508, he had for a

* Passavant states that he wished to know Da Vinci before his coming to Florence, and Sir C. Eastlake (p. 228.) traces close imitation of the smiling expression of this great artist's Madonnas, in some of those of Raphael, painted at Florence.

great length of time constant opportunities of contemplating the cartoon of Pisa. To suppose that he contemned the noble lessons which it conveyed to the world of Art, would be to suppose that he was no longer himself.

He saw it for the first time at the close of 1506; and a closer study of anatomy and form is soon after apparent in his own works.*

* Sir C. Eastlake's Life of Raphael, p. 228.

CHAPTER XI.

MICHAEL ANGELO'S DELIGHT IN LITERARY STUDIES. — IS SUMMONED TO ROME BY POPE JULIUS II. — CHARACTER OF THIS POPE. — M. ANGELO IS COMMANDED BY HIM TO COMMENCE HIS MAUSOLEUM. — ACCOUNT OF THE PLAN FOR IT. — HE GOES TO CARRARA TO RAISE THE NECESSARY MARBLES. — HE ZEALOUSLY PROSECUTES THE WORK; BUT SUDDENLY THE POPE'S ARDOUR COOLS, AND HE TREATS MICHAEL ANGELO WITH STUDIED NEGLECT. — INDIGNANT AT THIS TREATMENT, HE RETIRES TO FLORENCE, AND RESUMES HIS LABOURS ON THE CARTOON OF PISA. — THE POPE SUMMONS HIM TO RETURN, BUT IN VAIN. — THEIR RECONCILIATION. — EXECUTES A BRONZE STATUE OF JULIUS II. — ITS SUBSEQUENT DESTRUCTION.

1504 TO 1507.

In the midst of these artistic pursuits, literary studies ceased not to engage the attention of Michael Angelo. The Tuscan poets had long been the delight of his leisure hours, and Condivi tells us that at this particular time he was also occupied in studying the best Italian prose writers.* But whatever range his mind took in collecting various sweets within the precincts of the Italian Parnassus, he ever returned with fresh admiration and preference to the page of Dante; and we are

* Condivi, cap. 23.

assured that he even knew by heart the "Divina Commedia." This preference was a natural consequence of the sympathy which existed between the sublime and philosophical mind of that great poet and his own. The same rich, creative, soaring, and somewhat sombre imagination belonged to both; the same sagacious penetration into character, the same love of the mysterious and marvellous, the same lofty independence, and wide excursiveness of thought.

How deep was the impression which the great Florentine's immortal genius had made upon his imagination, was so obvious in some of his subsequent works, as to procure for him the distinctive appellation of the Dante of Art.

In the composition, however, of those beautiful and intellectual Sonnets, which have established his claim to a fourth crown in the race of genius, Petrarch was his model. That some of these effusions of his muse were penned at this time, we know from the testimony of Condivi *; and it might also be inferred from the various memoranda found amidst his artistic studies; for instance, on the reverse of one of his drawings for the colossal statue of David, formerly in the possession of Mariette, the following elegant couplet occurs in his handwriting:—

"Al dolce mormorar d' un fumicello
Ch' aduggia di verd' ombra un chiaro fonte."

* Condivi, cap. 23.

While his time was divided between these quiet and delightful pursuits and the prosecution of the cartoon of Pisa, a gracious and flattering summons reached him, in the year 1504, from Julius II., to wait upon him at Rome in the line of his profession. The summons was accompanied by a remittance of two hundred ducats for the expenses of his journey. The character of the pontiff with whom Michael Angelo was thus about to be placed in close relation, was one of the most stirring and remarkable of modern history. From youth to age, his life was one continued career of bold, daring, and successful enterprise. The invasion of Italy by Charles VIII., the revolutions in the duchy of Milan, the various intrigues of opposing factions at Rome, were all matters in the complications of which he had busied himself intensely, and had exercised a potent influence.

He laid his schemes for possessing himself of the papal tiara with singular dexterity and foresight; and, once in possession, he made Europe ring with the fame of his exploits.

His great objects as pope were threefold: to recover those states to the Church which had been wrested from it by conquest; to extend her temporal dominion; and to exalt her spiritual supremacy to the greatest possible height. As to the moral qualities of Christian wisdom, forbearance, and equity, or as to the pastoral virtues which ought to dignify and adorn the alleged Vicar of Jesus

Christ, they were wholly foreign to his disposition and habits. Promises and obligations of every sort were trampled upon by him without scruple, in order to carry out his ambitious schemes, and to put down opposition. The greatest powers in Europe became more or less, one after another, the ministers of that ambition; and by their aid, united to his own bold policy and indomitable spirit, he effectually humbled the pride of Venice, trampled down the Bentivogli at Bologna, and finally secured to the papal dominion far more than had been wrung from it through the weakness of his predecessors.

With no less success, he subdued and put down the rebellious Roman barons. In effecting these objects, he manifested equal promptitude, sagacity, and energy. No difficulties, no dangers, could relax his courage, or subdue his resolution.

The siege of Mirandula was carried on by him in the depth of a severe and snowy winter; and, braving its inclemency, he was wont to be seen, at the age of seventy, in the trenches, prompting the courage of his soldiers, and animating the counsels of their chiefs.

He mingled feelings of Italian patriotism with those of papal ambition. Though freely using, by turns, according to his necessities, the aid of the Emperor, or of the French king, he was so jealous of the interference of both in the affairs of Italy, that he meditated the formation of a federal league, composed of her various states, of which Rome

should be the centre, for the express purpose of expelling the stranger from her fair territory.

Even on the verge of the grave, though enfeebled by intemperance and debauchery, "he wanted," as a Venetian aptly said, "to be lord and master of the game of the world." *

To no pontiff are the fine arts more indebted. He loved Art for its own sake, and he loved it still more as a means of exalting the grandeur and extending the influence of the Romish Church. He founded the majestic fabric of the modern St. Peter's. The Sistine Chapel, and the halls of the Vatican, attest his enlightened patronage of painting; and the great names of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Bramante, are indelibly associated with that of Julius II. His personal vanity prompted him, at the commencement of his reign, to conceive the scheme of a splendid mausoleum, from the chisel of Buonarroti, which should perpetuate the claims which he had already, as he thought, established to the admiration of posterity. The first call made upon Michael Angelo by the pope, after his arrival in Rome, was for the plan of such a mausoleum; and he further directed that a place, in the ancient church of St. Peter's, should be fixed upon for its reception. The tribune of this church had been enlarged, and, in part rebuilt, by Nicho-

* Guicciardini, Ist. d' Ital. lib. xi. p. 75–6. Ranke's Hist. of the Popes, cap. ii. p. 54, &c. Sismondi, cap. cx.

las V., but was still unfinished, and Michael Angelo stated that its immediate completion was an essential preliminary. San Gallo and Bramante, architects of high reputation, and the latter a special favourite with the pope, were accordingly commissioned to survey the tribune, and to report upon the proposed site. Out of the conferences which ensued between Bramante and Julius upon this matter, originated the idea of rebuilding St. Peter's, in a style of superior grandeur and magnificence, and of placing the tomb in some conspicuous part of the new edifice. Plans were subsequently submitted to the pope for this purpose, and that of Bramante was preferred as the finest. Hence, the modern church of St. Peter's was a consequence of what proved the abortive scheme for the tomb of Julius. The projected mausoleum, had it been completed, would have given ample scope for the display of Michael Angelo's great powers as a sculptor, and would doubtless have been a prodigy of Art. Vasari and Condivi describe the plan in terms mainly accordant with a design, still to be seen in the collection of Michael Angelo's drawings, in the Florentine Gallery. It was to have been isolated; in form a parallelogram, presenting four fronts; and the whole was to have been surmounted by a light marble baldaquin, or temple, beneath which was to have been the sarcophagus of Julius, with two angels above it, the one in an attitude of grief, as deploring his loss,

the other pointing to heaven,—a region to hold communion with which, while upon earth, it must be acknowledged that the bluff old pontiff had never shown any disposition. In the principal fronts were to have been two niches, with figures of Victories treading down vanquished enemies, emblematical of the provinces conquered by Julius, or reunited to the Church by his policy; and, on each side of the niches, termini, with figures enchained to them, among which were to have been those of the liberal arts, including Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, all restricted and paralysed, as it were, in consequence of his death. Over the termini, a rich entablature was to have projected, and to have architecturally bound together the lower parts of the edifice; and on a platform, above, were to have been placed the most imposing features of the mausoleum, consisting of eight colossal statues of Prophets, Apostles, and Virtues, including those of Moses and St. Paul. The statues were to have been altogether forty in number; and, among them, those of a Leah and a Rachel,—as emblems of active and contemplative life, in conformity to Dante's poetic fancy,—were to have been introduced. The surface of the edifice was to have been further diversified, and adorned by appropriate bas-reliefs, in marble and in bronze.

Such was the ardour of the pope to realize this grand design, that Michael Angelo, in obedience to his wishes, set off, after the plan was approved,

with two companions, for Carrara, to superintend the raising of the necessary marbles.

Eight tedious months were consumed in this process; and sometimes, as he strolled beneath the magnificent peaks of the marble mountain of Carrara, and surveyed the vast blocks heaped together in its quarries, he felt tempted to solace his leisure by shaping some of them into a colossus, which should perpetuate to future times the memory of his sojourn there.

The marbles, when raised, were expedited to Rome, where they nearly filled up the piazza of the old St. Peter's. The sight of them delighted the pope, who was also charmed by witnessing the fervour with which Michael Angelo, on his return, commenced his labours. His visits now became so frequent, that a temporary bridge was constructed to connect the studio of the artist with the corridor of the papal palace, so as to give Julius easy access. For some time nothing could exceed his good humour; so much so, that Condivi, quoting Michael Angelo's words to himself, states, that the pope used to come and talk with him about the tomb, and upon other topics also, with the cordiality of a brother.

During this interval of calm and prosperity, he terminated two figures of slaves, destined for the tomb, in an incomparable style of art. They were afterward presented by him to Roberto Strozzi, in

grateful acknowledgment of his having received him into his house during an illness; from him they passed into the possession of Francis I., who presented them to the Constable de Montmorency. They are now to be seen in the Louvre.* He also nearly finished one of the Victories, with a figure prostrate beneath it, which finally found its way into the great council-chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence. The grand statue of Moses, of which we shall have to speak more particularly, was now also advanced to a high degree of finish. Some marbles were sent by him to Florence, with the intention of working on them during the season of malaria at Rome; and he commenced eight other statues. Proceeding at this rate, his principal labours would have been speedily terminated, had they not been suddenly arrested by means of a court intrigue.

The extraordinary marks of preference shown him by the pope, excited, it seems, the jealousy of many of those who competed with him for his favour, and especially that of Bramante, a name of the highest reputation in architecture. Anxious to check an influence from which he augured a diminution of his own, he is said, among other

* It was with some difficulty the author traced out these fine statues in the Louvre, in 1847; and, on inquiry, he was surprised to find various accomplished Frenchmen ignorant that their Musée possessed such a treasure. They have since been appropriately placed in the "Galerie de la Renaissance."

expedients for cooling the pope's ardour in favour of the mausoleum, to have worked on his superstition, by suggesting, that for a man to prepare his tomb in his own life-time, was well known to be a fatal omen. "But not envy alone," says Condivi, "stimulated Bramante; he had already learned to appreciate the scientific skill and honest independence of Buonarroti, and he had reason to fear that they were sometimes employed in exposing his own mistakes and carelessness in the construction of some of the public buildings then in course of erection from his plans."* Both he and Vasari add, that Bramante was so entirely a man of pleasure, and lived so much beyond his means, that the provision assigned him by the pope was inadequate to his expenditure, and that the public buildings suffered, in consequence, in various ways.† This charge is verified by fact; for Sixtus V. was obliged to take down various parts of the expensive ornamental constructions erected by Julius in and about the Belvidere of the Vatican, under the directions of Bramante, in consequence of defects in the materials or the foundations; and it was found necessary, again and again, to strengthen

* Condivi, cap. xxv., says, "Ma oltre questo (jealousy of the high favour of the Pope to M. A.) lo stimolava il timore ch' aveva del giudizio di Michelagnolo, il quale molti suoi errori scopriva."

† French edition of Vasari, vol. iv. p. 95.; Condivi, cap. xxv.; and Vasari, Vit. di M. Ang. Vasari's Life of Bramante.

the foundations of the four great arches on which the dome of St. Peter's reposes.

The impatience of Julius might in some of these cases have put the architect off his guard. It was such, that he seemed almost to expect to see the edifices, which he had ordered to be erected, start out of the earth by a sort of enchantment. Bramante's star, however, was just now so much on the ascendant, that he gradually contrived to alienate the mind of Julius from the effectual prosecution of the mausoleum. This change of feeling first became manifest upon the arrival of a further shipment of marbles from Carrara, when, in conformity with previous directions, Michael Angelo went to the papal palace to request payment of the sum required for the freight, and other expenses. Finding that the pope was engaged on public business when he called, and could not see him, he immediately advanced the required amount, in expectation of quickly receiving an order for his reimbursement; but, as none arrived, he repeated his visit. On entering the papal antechamber, he was stopped by one of the officers on duty, who told him he must not proceed further. A bishop, who overheard what passed, addressing the officer, said, "Surely, you cannot be aware whom you are speaking to?" "Oh! yes, I am," he replied; "but my duty is to attend to the orders of my superiors." The repulse, it now became clear, was a studied one; and Michael Angelo, indignant at this treat-

ment, turning upon his heel, exclaimed, "You may tell the pope that, should he wish to see me again, he will have to seek me elsewhere." Returning home, he impetuously ordered his two servants to sell his household furniture, and, after securing the money, to follow him to Florence. Then taking horse, he quitted Rome in high displeasure, and pushed on for Poggibondi, within the Florentine territory, where he arrived at two o'clock the ensuing morning. Here he felt personally safe, and stopped to take some rest. In the meantime, no less than five couriers had been despatched after him by Julius, with orders to bring him back, wherever they might find him; but none of them dared attempt any such violence beyond the precincts of the Roman state; they, therefore, quickly passed from menaces to entreaties, and, finding both equally vain, they at length requested, as a favour, that he would at least commit to paper a few lines stating that he had passed the Roman frontiers before they overtook him. The pope's written order, which they exhibited, was a summons, directing him instantly to return to Rome, on pain of his high displeasure. Michael Angelo, after reading it, briefly expressed his resolution never to return, seeing that his zealous and faithful services had been requited by a contumelious repulse from the papal presence.

He added that, as his Holiness no longer chose to trouble himself about the tomb, he felt himself set

free, and would not again part with his liberty to any one. He proceeded to Florence; and, during a stay of three months there, no less than as many briefs were addressed by the pope to the seignory, ordering them to send back the fugitive to Rome, by fair means or by force.

He now employed himself in finishing the cartoon of Pisa. It must ever be a subject of deep regret to the lovers of Art, that the interval thus employed was not long enough to allow of his perpetuating this grand composition, by painting it upon the walls of the great council-chamber, as was originally intended.

His friend, Pietro Soderini, who was still gonfaloniere, and who formed the animating soul of the Florentine councils, took little notice of the first of the briefs, thinking the pope's wrath would cool; but on the arrival of a second and a third, he said to their object, "My friend, you have had an encounter with the pope, upon which even a king of France could hardly have ventured. This cannot proceed further; nor must you imagine that we are disposed to go to war on your account. Do therefore, I entreat you, make up your mind to return." It so happened that Michael Angelo had received a message from the Grand Seignior just before this conversation, through certain Franciscan friars, inviting him to Constantinople, to construct a bridge from that city to Pera. Thither he felt inclined to proceed, since he could not remain at

Florence; but Soderini earnestly dissuaded him from it, and, at length, overcame his reluctance to return to Rome, by proposing to invest him with diplomatic functions on the part of the republic, so as to render his person sacred. This had scarcely been arranged, when news arrived that Bologna had been taken by the papal troops; that Julius was there in person, and that the success of his arms had put him into the highest spirits and good humour. Michael Angelo thoroughly understood the pope's character, and concluding that, if he presented himself at this moment of elation, he should be sure of a favourable reception, set off without delay for Bologna. His Holiness was at table in the palace of the Sedici, when his arrival was announced: he instantly desired he might be ushered into his presence. On his entering, he received him with a stern countenance, and exclaimed, "So you are there! You ought to have come and sought us out, instead of waiting for us to come and seek you,"—implying that Bologna being much nearer to Florence than to Rome, the pope might, in a certain sense, be said to have come thither in search of him. Michael Angelo, in a kneeling attitude, now entreated forgiveness; adding, that he had not erred from any want of duty, but in consequence of having so keenly felt the repulse he had encountered. Julius all this time sat with his head declined, and with angry looks, as though swallowing his wrath, but making

no reply; when a monsignore, in attendance, attempted to add to his apology, by saying that he hoped the pope would pardon him, as ignorance had caused his offence; and that such men knew nothing beyond the limits of their Art. Julius, displeased at this interference, now exclaimed, "You are insulting him, which I have not;—*you* are the ignoramus, not he. Instantly quit my presence." Upon which he was pushed to the door by the officers in waiting; and the pope, turning to Michael Angelo, assured him of his pardon, and desired him not to quit Bologna, as he required his services.*

This interview was immediately followed by a commission to execute his statue, in bronze, on a colossal scale, for the façade of the great church of St. Petronius. He accordingly proceeded to model the figure; the right hand of which was raised in the attitude of benediction; but being a little dubious how to dispose of the left, he consulted the pope upon it, in one of his frequent visits to watch the progress of the work. To the question whether he would like a book to be placed in his left hand; "*A sword rather*," was his characteristic reply; "I was never addicted to letters." Then pointing to the right arm, he inquired, "Is it raised by way of blessing or menace?" The artist, knowing the fiery spirit of the pontiff, interpreted his private

* Vasari and Condivi slightly differ in their account of this interview; but not in the main facts.

feelings in the latter sense, and replied, "It menaces the people, Holy Father, in case they should prove rebellious." Sixteen months of precious time, which might have imprinted the cartoon of Pisa, in fresco, upon the walls of the council chamber, were consumed upon this vain labour, for vain it proved. It was placed in its destined niche over the portal of St. Petronius, in the year 1507, and was universally admired as a grand and imposing statue; but, in the year 1511, upon the re-entry of the Bentivogli, it became the object of popular fury, was thrown down from its pedestal, and broken in pieces. The fragments were purchased by Alphonso, Duke of Ferrara, and converted into a piece of artillery, which he used to call his "Julian"; a fitter emblem this of the real spirit of the pontiff, than the sacerdotal figure which furnished the materials. After all, the loss of a fine bronze statue, of so remarkable a man as Pope Julius II. by Michael Angelo, is a just subject of regret.

In this altercation with Julius, should it appear that Michael Angelo was hasty in giving no time for explanation, it must be borne in mind that the provocation was extreme. After his severe personal privations at Carrara, and after the prodigality of zeal with which, in obedience to the pope's urgent wishes, he had prosecuted the statues for the tomb,—after receiving also such high marks of favour,—to find himself suddenly spurned without any reason

from the papal presence, was more than his feelings, impetuous by nature, and very sensitive upon the point of honour, could quietly endure. He felt that tame submission to such treatment would compromise his independence and self-respect, and would expose him to a recurrence of similar indignities. To remain, under such circumstances, in the power of a man whose will was law, and who, when opposed, exacted unbounded submission, was not less dangerous than degrading. He had, therefore, deemed flight his only resource. His proceeding was the rebound of a lofty and honourable mind at unjust and contumelious treatment; and it probably guarded him, in a great degree, in his future relations with Julius, from the caprices of despotism.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE URGENT INSTANCE OF JULIUS II., BUT CONTRARY TO HIS OWN WISHES, MICHAEL ANGELO PAINTS THE CEILING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL. — HIS ADMIRABLE SUCCESS IN THIS GREAT WORK. — RENEWED ALTERCATION WITH THE POPE, WHICH PROVES MOMENTARY.

In the year 1508, Michael Angelo returned to Rome. During his absence, other objects, to the exclusion of the projected mausoleum, had gained full possession of the mind of the sovereign pontiff. The stupendous scheme of rebuilding St. Peter's, on a scale of unparalleled magnificence, was in progress, from the plans and under the direction of Bramante. Great additions and decorations had been carrying on in the palace of the Vatican, and plans for adding still further to its splendour were under consideration. Foremost among these was the employment of the pencil of Raphael, in adorning its principal halls and apartments with paintings in fresco on a grand scale.

This illustrious artist, then in the prime of youth, and approaching the maturity of his wonderful powers, had recently been introduced to Julius by

Bramante, who was his cousin. The pope, captivated by the charm of his address and by his great talents, had treated him with equal kindness and confidence, and was so anxious to find ample space within the Vatican for the productions of his enchanting pencil, that he had already, for this special purpose, consigned to premature destruction many frescoes of high interest, by earlier painters of great name.

It was no small disappointment and vexation to Michael Angelo to find himself, although restored to the pope's favour, still excluded from the prosecution of the great work upon which he had already expended so much precious time, and which he was most anxious to resume. He found, in fact, that the mind of Julius was altogether alienated from his once favourite project, and that the question was unresolved in what way his talents were to be employed. In this emergency, if we are to trust the united testimony of Vasari and Condivi, Bramante followed up his former cabals by suggesting to the pope a proposition calculated, as he conceived, seriously to injure the reputation of the man whom he both feared and envied, by engaging him in an undertaking in which he would be almost sure to fail, from its being wholly unsuited to his experience and habits. This was to invite Michael Angelo to paint, in fresco, the vast ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, an appendage of the Vatican palace, and so called from its having been built by

Sixtus IV. Whatever were the motives of Bramante, the suggestion so much pleased Julius, that he lost no time in pressing it on Michael Angelo, to whom it proved equally unexpected and unpalatable. He earnestly entreated the pope not to insist upon it; he told him that he was a *sculptor*, and that painting in fresco was a branch of art in which he had had no experience; and he concluded by saying that Raphael was the man, of all others, the most qualified for such an undertaking. These objections were urged in vain: the inexorable Julius would admit of no refusal, and, at length, he almost forced from him a reluctant assent.

Happy was it for the fine arts that he did so. The result was the production of a work so incomparably grand and impressive, both in its conception and execution, that we are tempted to hope Bramante's advice was not the result of any malignant feeling, but a consequence of his high and just estimate of the powers of Buonarroti. It may be urged in favour of this view of the case, that he was justified in regarding the artist who had produced, and who had been ready to paint, in fresco, the cartoon of Pisa, as fully equal to the task which it was now sought to impose on him.

It is true, that vault-painting requires the exercise of far greater science and skill than mere wall-painting; and that therefore Michael Angelo, though

ready to engage in the one, might, with just show of reason, decline the other.

Sensitive minds are often apt, without sufficient reason, to impute to those opposed to them corrupt motives. We would not willingly load the memory of so great an artist as Bramante with the odious imputation fastened on him by the biographers of Michael Angelo, and as it would seem by himself.

The point once yielded, he braced up all his powers of mind and body to the gigantic task. As a necessary preliminary, Bramante was commanded by the pope to construct the requisite scaffolding in the chapel. He prepared, accordingly, a hanging platform bound together with cordage, the supporting beams of which were to be fixed into holes in the walls. "But," inquired Michael Angelo, "when my labours are completed, and your scaffolding is removed, how are the holes to be filled up?" The difficulty had not occurred to him, and his unsatisfactory reply was, "As to that, we will think of it afterwards; there is no other way of proceeding." "Leave the remedy to me," replied the artist, who then proposed a plan of his own, which effected the object by means of props and counterprops, and other resources which should not touch the wall; an invention which, it is added, proved very useful, not only to future vault-painters, but to Bramante himself, in the build-

ing of St. Peter's.* He now proceeded to form his general design, the adaptation of which, to the shape and the accidents of the vaulted ceiling, is not less skilful than the conception and style of the subjects which adorn it is sublime and original. When his cartoons were finished, and he was prepared to set to work, he almost despaired of success; for never having practised vault-painting, and having had only moderate experience of painting in fresco twenty years before in the school of Ghirlandajo, he found himself at a loss in the mechanical processes of the art, and therefore summoned from Florence several of his artistic friends of former days, to aid him with their counsel and assistance. Among these were Granacci, the friend of his youth, G. Bugiardini, L'Indico vecchio, Agnolo di Domino, and Salviati Lanzi. They all understood the processes of fresco painting, and so far rendered him service; but, on his attempting to make use of them as Raphael did of Julio Romano, Perino di Vaga, and others, to paint from his cartoons, they proved so incapable of catching their fire and inspiration, that he found himself compelled, not only to dispense with their services, but to efface their work, and to recommence the whole himself. As none of the suitors of Penelope could bend the bow of Ulysses, so one hand alone was capable of wielding the pencil of Buonarroti.

* Vasari, and Note of Roman Editors, p. 95.

Henceforth he relied wholly on himself: he even ground his own colours; and daily pursued his work in solitude and silence, taking the keys of the chapel into his own custody, and allowing no one to enter within its precincts.

Owing to its great length and elevation, and to the very imperfect diffusion of the light, he found it impossible to fix the point of perspective, so as to convey to spectators, from any one spot, a just impression of the whole composition. Had it been the good fortune of Michael Angelo at Rome, and of Correggio at Parma, to have exerted their great powers in apartments or localities duly lighted, the impressions produced by their works, profound as they are, would have been far more so. Each figure and compartment, though a study in itself, has special reference to a ruling idea, which we shall presently explain.

A fresh difficulty now presented itself. The colours which had produced, when first laid on, the precise effect which he intended, became, after a short time, so absorbed into the plaster in various parts, and so suffused by a misty hue, that the great artist deemed his labour vain, and told the pope, with deep emotion, that all his first sinister anticipations were fully realised, and that he must abandon the undertaking. Julius upon this sent San Gallo to him, whose experience in fresco-painting enabled him immediately to detect the cause. It was a consequence of the peculiar nature

of the lime of Rome, which, being made from travertine, dried very slowly, and produced this effect, until the stucco became free from moisture. Reassured by this intelligence, he again rigorously prosecuted his labours, and soon found, to his great delight, the anticipations of San Gallo verified.

The mystery of his proceedings naturally augmented the public curiosity; and Julius, who had long been bursting with impatience to inspect the work, and had already submitted to more than one refusal of admittance, now urged his suit so strongly that compliance became necessary. The paintings could only be viewed from the platform; and the aged pontiff, aided by a small staircase contrived on purpose for him, mounted to the platform with much spirit, and was profoundly impressed by a survey of the marvellous work of art which then opened on his view. He repeated these visits until one side of the whole length of the chapel was completed, and then expressed an earnest wish that the public might share in his gratification. In vain Michael Angelo protested against the removal of the scaffolding, as he had still to bestow on the figures many finishing touches. He was forced to yield compliance to the pope's solicitations, and to leave the work less perfect than he had intended.

The scaffolding was in consequence removed, and before the dust had dissipated, Julius was the first to enter the chapel. All that was most emi-

nent in taste, rank, and talent in Rome, quickly followed; and it may readily be imagined with what feelings of wonder and admiration the grand creations of the Sistine Chapel were surveyed, when in all their first freshness and brilliancy.

When the eye of the spectator glanced from figures and compositions so replete with sublime conception and masterly design, to the comparatively timid pencilling and feeble drawing of the ancient frescoes below, they beheld a new epoch in Art; and recognised in Michael Angelo a painter no less than a sculptor of the highest grade, whose works, in both the sister arts, already stamped upon his age a new character.

Such was the universal sentiment; and yet, strange to say, Bramante is charged by Condivi with having intrigued with the pope* to commit the execution of the remaining half of the ceiling to the pencil of Raphael, who, he scruples not to add, entered into the plot. It appears incredible that his generous and amiable nature should have shared in an attempt to offer such an indignity to such a man, and there is good reason to discredit the story, because Vasari makes no mention of it.

Some occasion did however arise, possibly about this time, when Michael Angelo felt called upon, in justice to himself, to comment, in conversation with Julius, upon what he conceived to be attempts,

* Condivi, cap. xxxviii.

on the part of Bramante, to lower him in the pope's favour. On this occasion, he not only touched upon his own wrongs, but also upon those of which he thought the public had just reason to complain, in consequence of Bramante's careless discharge of his professional duties; in particular he pointed out the want of skill with which, under his orders, the superb marble columns, which adorned the aisles of the old St. Peter's (many of them single shafts, the spoils of the temples and palaces of Imperial Rome), had been taken down, and irreparably injured or fractured. He explained how all this might have been avoided by a skilful application of machinery; and he touched also on the slights and opposition which he had in various ways experienced from him.

Bramante, according to Vasari, in his imprudent eagerness to push forward the new church, had not only dealt in this way with the columns, but had unnecessarily destroyed many things of high archæological interest in the ancient Basilica, such as mosaics, paintings, and numerous portraits of illustrious personages.*

The pope, though indissolubly bound to Bramante and Raphael, was so much charmed with the great works of the Sistine Chapel, that he expressed himself, on this occasion, in the most soothing and confiding terms to Michael Angelo;

* Vasari, Vita Bram.

and, with many assurances of his favour, urged an immediate resumption of his labours.*

The scaffolding being replaced, he again, addressed himself to the work with all his former ardour, and his biographers declare that, within the space of twenty months, the whole of it was completed. In this statement, there must probably be some exaggeration, since the conception, preparation for, and perfection of such a vast and laborious work appear sufficient to have employed much of the life of an artist, rather than the brief space of something less than two years.

Condivi adds that he often heard Michael Angelo say that he should have brought the whole to a much higher degree of finish, had it not been for the hindrances created by the petulant and repeated impatience of Julius. A curious instance of the kind is related, in somewhat different terms, by his two biographers. We shall, therefore, place before our readers both versions.

One day, towards the close of his labours, Julius, according to Condivi, pressed him to state how soon the chapel would be completed: the only reply he could get was, "As soon as I am able." The pope, taking fire, rejoined, "I see you want that I should order you to be thrown down from this platform." "I'll take care you shall not

* "Facendogli," says Condivi, "più favori che mai facesse." Cap. xxxviii.

have the opportunity," replied the painter, and, instantly retiring, gave orders for the removal of the scaffolding.*

Vasari recounts the same incident as follows:— Not long before the termination of his labours, Michael Angelo, having a pressing call to Florence, requested a short leave of absence, and also the payment of a sum of money due to him. "But," said the pope, "when will the chapel be finished?" "As soon as I am able," he replied. "As soon as you are able, *indeed*," exclaimed Julius; "I'll take care that you quickly finish it;" giving him, as he uttered these words, a touch with his stick. Michael Angelo, construing this as a personal affront, hastened home, and was preparing to depart for Florence, when the pope's chamberlain arrived with 500 scudi for him, and a message to say that he was to regard what had just passed as a mere joke. He readily accepted this explanation, and found Julius quite prepared to resume friendly relations towards him. This great work, being at length completed, was displayed to public view on All Saints' day (November 1st), in the year 1512. Julius himself attended the service of the chapel on this occasion, and partook of the admiration with which it was surveyed by a crowded auditory.

* Condivi, p. 41. Vasari, p. 47. Condivi also mentions the facts here stated by Vasari.

For a length of time after its termination, Michael Angelo suffered severely from the consequences of having, for a space of nearly two years, perpetually worked with his eyes in an elevated position. The consequence was utter inability to read a letter, or look at a drawing, without holding it above his forehead. This infirmity gradually subsided.

When the first ardour of the pontiff became abated, he recollected that, but for his impatience, various parts of the draperies of the figures would have been touched with ultramarine and gold, and many finishing strokes have been added. He was now anxious that all this should be done; but Michael Angelo, shrinking from the trouble of again erecting the scaffolding, maintained that it was unnecessary. "I *must* have it touched thus in parts with gold," said the pope. "Holy Father," he replied, "the sainted characters depicted above did not wear ornaments of gold." "Without the gold," rejoined the pope, "the work will look poor." "They were poor men," he replied; "they were saints who despised riches." This was said in a tone of good humour; and, as Julius did not further press the point, these additions were never made.

According to Vasari, 15,000 ducats was the sum which Julius engaged to pay for this great work, but he only paid down 3,000. He appears, however, to have made his engagement good by other means; for Vasari adds, that he manifested his delight in the

result, by loading Michael Angelo with pecuniary and personal favours; and, it is certain from the way in which the latter always spoke of Julius II., that he had no reason to charge him with want of liberality, much less with any actual breach of good faith.

"The increasing consideration of the public for Art was marked," says Vasari, "by the augmented prices paid henceforth for pictures." "The prices of our day," he adds, "are twenty times higher than were those of our predecessors." They began to mount up from the time that Benvenuto Cellini demanded 7,000 scudi as the price for his Perseus, though the ministers of the Grand Duke Cosmo refused to pay him more than 3,000."

Michael Angelo stands single and alone, no less in the force and spirit of his execution, than in the grandeur of his conceptions. Never was pencil more obedient than his to the suggestions of the intellect. Those who have had the privilege of mounting, by means of temporary scaffolding, nearer to those awful Titanic forms of prophets and sibyls, who look down like another race of beings from their lofty seats, or who have availed themselves of the use of mirrors to bring them beneath the eye, never fail to be smitten with admiration at the dash and vigour of each stroke, and not less at its certainty and truth. On a fine day, aids like these will ensure, to the artist and the amateur, impressions of indelible wonder

and delight at the originality of this great artist's mind and style ; a style in which the relief of sculpture appears to blend with the richness and clair-obscur of painting. On this subject, the following passage from the learned Platner* will convey, we are persuaded, equal pleasure and instruction to the reader.

"Michael Angelo seems to have looked upon sculpture, for which he entertained a particular partiality, and which he was always inclined to consider as superior to the art of painting, as his principal vocation.

"In the mastery and perfection of his execution perhaps no modern sculptor can dispute the palm with him; but earlier artists, especially the Pisani and their contemporaries, kept more strictly than he within the proper limits of the plastic art.

"We think, moreover, his style to be more appropriate to painting than to sculpture, and are of opinion that he displays his greatness more particularly in the former art. It is therefore from his paintings in the Sistine Chapel, that his character as an artist must be chiefly estimated. And here we would observe, that we not only admire his paintings as far as form is concerned, but also his colouring and lights; and, more especially, his poetical invention.

* See Beschreibung der Stadt Rom, von E. Platner, C. Bunsen, &c.

"The subjects of the creation have never been represented with such sublimity and significance as in his works: Raphael was fond of drawing them down into a purely human sphere; Michael Angelo, on the other hand, always strove to represent the supernatural effects of the Eternal Word by visible actions; and in this respect he appears to have accomplished all that art can do. His ideal style appears more suited for ideal subjects, such as most of those in the Sistine Chapel, which refer to the general relation of man to God, than for those which, although belonging to sacred history, are yet conceived as historical phenomena of our actual world; into which we consequently desire to be transplaced by the style of their representation more than in the case of subjects of the former kind.

"In the correctness of his designs, and the perfect representation of form, Michael Angelo surpasses all masters of modern art. In him, the painter had, as it were, grown out of the sculptor. He therefore exerted himself in exhibiting the art of painting in rivalry with the plastic art, and endeavoured to attain in the former, by perspective and by the effect of light and shade, an equal perfection as in the real representations of sculpture. With his inclination to transfer the latter art to painting, the picturesque element of sculpture became an additional advantage to painting, which, if he had had a purer principle of the plastic art,

he would perhaps have confined within its peculiar limits. In the letter to Varchi, above referred to, he called sculpture the lantern (*la lucerna*) of painting; and he was right, in so far as the plastic art must be regarded, not indeed as the whole, but as the basis of painting, and in so far as it appears that it can be perfectly comprehended only by practising the real representation of form in sculpture. For, in order to give by the appearance in the art of painting a truly correct image of the bodily form, this form must be recognised in its real existence, just as a geometrical knowledge of a building is necessary in order to draw it in correct perspective. The fact of the early painters being usually not unacquainted with the plastic art, was undoubtedly a great assistance to them in acquiring a correct knowledge of form; and it would have been impossible for Michael Angelo, in particular, to attain his extraordinary plastic perfection in painting, without the mastery he had acquired in the art of sculpture. According to the testimony of Vasari, he used to model the figures for his cartoons in clay or wax, and to avail himself of these models in studying the light and shade, but more especially the perspective, in which, though it is the most difficult part of design, he attained a degree of perfection which it seems impossible to surpass.

"His desire to solve the most difficult problems of design has certainly sometimes led him, especially

in his Last Judgment, to sacrifice to the boldness and variety of attitudes their consistency with the expression of the action. This desire may have been excited, to some extent, by the dispute which was going on in his time between the painters and sculptors, with regard to the superiority of their respective arts. Among the arguments they advanced in favour of sculpture, they laid particular stress upon the fact, that the plastic art is able to represent a figure on all sides, while painting can only show one side of it.* It has really the appearance, as if Michael Angelo, in his Last Judgment, had intended to decide this dispute, and to show the art of painting in its victorious contest with sculpture, by endeavouring to supply the deficiency in consequence of which painting can exhibit only one side of the same figure, by the utmost possible variety of figures in all imaginable movements and aspects. Condivi, his pupil and contemporary, in fact, says that in this work he showed everything that the art of painting can make of the human body, no possible attitude or movement being omitted.

"His strong desire to attain perfect correctness and certainty in his designs must have awakened in him a great wish to study anatomy, affording,

* In order to refute this objection of the sculptors, the celebrated Giorgione painted a figure from behind, which showed its two sides by means of two mirrors introduced into the picture, and its front by means of a water-mirror. See Vasari.

as it does, a scientific knowledge of the system of bones and muscles concealed under the skin, which produces the varied appearance of the forms of the human body in its manifold movements. Those critics who reproached Michael Angelo for having been led by his zealous study of this science to represent bodies stripped of their skin, seem to betray by this statement that they know his style either from prints only, which usually give a very false notion of it, or from the works of his disciples and imitators, though several of those critics had been at Rome, and speak of their having seen the works of his own hand. The design of Michael Angelo is extremely distinct, but never harsh; and, notwithstanding this distinctness, the muscles are indicated by soft and gentle transitions; and we know of no artist who has been more perfectly successful than he in expressing the peculiar character of the skin and of the flesh full of nourishment and strength. The ideal formation of his human bodies, which appear to be exempt from the disturbing influences of reality, is indeed indicated also by a more delicate play of the muscles than in real nature, but never to the detriment of the main forms, which, on the contrary, are set forth in the manner which is required in a grand style."

CHAPTER XIII.

A PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF THE WHOLE COMPOSITION AND PAINTING OF THE SISTINE CEILING.

In the preceding chapter, we have described the circumstances under which the painting of the Sistine ceiling was commenced and carried on. We will now touch upon the scope of the whole composition, upon the connection of its various parts, and upon its most prominent and remarkable features.

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel exhibits the genius of Michael Angelo and his unrivalled powers of design in their highest perfection.* The cycle of Scriptural subjects which it includes forms the most comprehensive, the most exquisitely combined, and the most sublime of all his works. The subjects are chiefly supernatural or symbolical, and were, therefore, peculiarly suited to excite and animate the powers of his creative mind, which delighted in the picturesque and the ideal, in personifying abstract images, and in giving expression to Scriptural facts by forms the most grand

* Vasari, 4to. ed., Roma, 1760, p. 41.

and commanding. Sublimity is the prevailing character of his art; and his most ardent admirers are, therefore, to be found among those whom a spark of kindred feeling qualifies to elevate their views above the ordinary forms and images of physical and material objects, and to expatiate in the lofty regions of the possible and the intellectual.

The ceiling of the chapel forms in its section an expansive flattened arch, plane in the centre, and, therefore, affording convenient space for the series of subjects, nine in number, in which he has depicted the principal facts recorded in the book of Genesis, respecting the creation of the world, and the primeval history of mankind. They are disposed, in successive compartments, along its surface, the length of which is 132 English feet, the breadth 44, and the height from the pavement 68. At the springing of the vault, all around the chapel, he has introduced majestic figures of prophets and sibyls, as foretellers of the coming of the Saviour; and between them, and within the arches below, are a series of lunettes and figures illustrative of the Scriptural genealogy of the Virgin Mary and Christ.

These various compartments are formed by means of architectural divisions and ornaments painted in relief, which skilfully bind together the great central subjects, and also interlace all the subsidiary figures and subjects, assigning to each, according to its relative importance, an appropriate position, and yet so separating them that there is

no confusion of parts. It required a mind rich in the resources of architecture, painting, and sculpture, thus to combine, into one harmonious whole, the numerous portions of so vast and various a composition.

In the first five compartments, the great poet-painter aims to represent, by visible actions, the supernatural effects of the Eternal Word in creation; and it is generally admitted that, in this respect, he has accomplished all that Art is capable of by such means.

And here it may be observed, that it is beyond the scope of human power to represent supernatural objects *as such*. All that it can do, is to convey an idea of them by appropriate signs and symbols; in the use of which, reason and revelation equally inculcate a sacred reserve and awe with respect to those which have reference to the Supreme and Sovereign Majesty. Early Christian Art set the example of this sacred reserve. Byzantine Art led the way in its presumptuous transgression; and early Italian Art, though it gradually emancipated itself from Byzantine trammels, adhered in many points to its conventional types, and not least in this particular. Early German Art did the same. And we consequently find figures representing the Almighty, in his pure essence, most irreverently introduced by painters of all schools since the Revival. Early Christian Art indicated the spiritual presence of the Omnipresent Deity by expressive

symbols; and when they introduced the figure of Christ in his Divine Nature, it was either as the Creator of the World, assuming a visible form for special purposes, or as the glorified Redeemer. Examples of the first more frequently occur in sculpture, on tombs, than in painting.

Considering the tenor of Scriptural language (our only safe guide in such matters), it would seem, that the Creative Word, in gracious accommodation to human infirmity, did occasionally converse with man in his primeval state of innocence under a human semblance; and that, after his forfeiture of Paradise, he occasionally exercised, by similar means, his merciful assumption of the office of Saviour and Intercessor. In this sense, the language of the Bible was understood by one of the most sublime of human intellects, deeply versed also in theological learning — the immortal Milton; who, amidst the laments which he puts into the mouth of Adam after his fall, makes him speak as follows: —

> "This most afflicts me, that departing hence
> As from his face I shall be hid, deprived
> His blessed countenance; here I could frequent
> With worship, place by place, where he vouchsafed
> Presence divine, and to my sons relate;
> On this mount he appeared, under this tree
> Stood visible, among these pines his voice
> I heard, here with him at this fountain talked."

And again,—

"How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? those heavenly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly, with their blaze
Insufferably bright."

Paradise Lost, books ix. and xi.

In such a semblance, he condescendingly visits and confers with Abraham,—wrestles with Jacob, to whom also he manifests himself at the summit of the mystic ladder,—and animates, as captain of the Lord's hosts, the faith and courage of Joshua. Thus, also, Isaiah and Ezekiel beheld him, in vision, enthroned in glory.

In the theology of the most ancient fathers of the Church, these appearances were regarded as manifestations of the Son of God, of whom Scripture speaks as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; and who, previously to his incarnation, is represented as exercising various acts of grace and power, preparatory to that great event. From the moment of the promise, that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head, he became head over all things to his future Church and people. To Him—the Eternal Word—the creation of the world is unequivocally ascribed; and to his providence and grace are referred the miraculous interpositions vouchsafed to Moses, and to the Israelites, in their progress towards Canaan. "They did all eat," says St. Paul, "the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they

* Justini Mart. Dial. cum Tryphone, p. 97, Paris, folio, 1554.

drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ."

It has already been stated that Michael Angelo was intimately conversant with the sacred oracles, both of the Old and New Testaments, and that in the decline of life they formed the object of his special study; and it was in the spirit of the passages which record these manifestations that he painted the Sistine Chapel.

The first compartment represents the Deity (as the Word personified) in the act of separating light from darkness. The action of the figure is most grand and commanding.*

Two separate acts of almighty power are represented in the second compartment. First, the creation of the sun and moon, whose luminous orbs are supposed to have just taken their places in the heavens in obedience to the divine mandate. Secondly, the creation of trees, herbs, and vegetable substances. These are indicated by a mass of green vegetation in a corner of the picture, above which the assumed form of the Omnific Word is seen floating in the air, with his back to the spectator. The attitude and bearing of this averted figure are sublime, and the foreshortening marvellous. It

* The attention of the British public has been specially drawn to it by the eloquent terms in which Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his Lectures upon Painting, refers to this compartment. It was afterwards imitated by Raphael in one of those of the Loggie, but with inferior power.

catches the eye from every part of the chapel, and fascinates by its overpowering grandeur.

In the third compartment, the Creator is represented as bending over the waters in an attitude of impressive dignity, and calling into existence marine and aquatic substances. The creation of man follows. The figure of Adam, the original type of the human race, is distinguished by its manly beauty, perfect drawing, fine proportion and attitude, and plastic energy. Just awoke, as it were, into conscious being, his eye is directed to his Divine Maker, who looks down majestically and graciously upon him, from amidst a choir of seraphic beings; while at the same time he unfolds to him the awful covenant of life and death. Rauch, of Berlin, one of the greatest of modern sculptors, recently told me he considered this compartment to be unrivalled in design and composition; adding of the Sistine, "It is the chapel of chapels."

The succeeding subject is the creation of woman. The mysterious process of her formation is indicated by the figure of Adam buried in profound sleep in a corner of the picture. That of Eve is just in advance of him, gracefully bending forward in supplicatory homage to her Creator, who is represented as benignantly regarding and addressing her. This subject occupies the central point of the ceiling; and the great painter, in so placing it, may be supposed to point to woman as at once the loveliest of the works of God, and the source of human

woe; as the instigator of the first transgression, and yet the mother of that "promised seed" who should reverse its direful consequences, and reopen to man the gate of life and immortality.

Two subjects are combined in the next compartment,—the fall of our first parents, and their consequent ejection from Paradise. The tempter is seen in the appearance, often assigned to him in earlier Christian Art, of a body, human and beautiful above, but terminating in serpentine folds, which encircle the trunk of the forbidden tree. Adam is painted in the act of plucking the fatal fruit, and Eve, a most graceful and elegant figure, as reclining below, and anxious to receive it from him. The second subject emanates from the first: The unhappy pair, after hearing their sentence pronounced by the voice of God, are represented as overwhelmed with guilt and sorrow, and as flying with piteous gestures from their blissful seat, under the guidance of a cherub, whose sword of flame waves over their heads in signal of divine wrath.

The awful consequences of sin in the prevalence of universal corruption, and the consequent destruction of the human race by the waters of the deluge, form the subjects of the seventh and eighth compartments. In the former, the figure of the venerable Noah appears as offering sacrifice before entering into the ark, and imploring, with outstretched arms, the continued protection of the God of his fathers, who had so wonderfully interposed

for his deliverance. Before him is an altar with fire upon it, in front of which his sons are seen energetically employed in preparing the sacrificial victims. These and the other attendant figures are models of fine drawing; and the whole composition is noble and picturesque. The deluge itself follows. In consequence of the complexity of the subject, the figures composing it are much smaller than in the former, and it requires artificial aid fully to appreciate its beauties, which are of a high order. On the right and left hand, appear the summits of mountains, upon which groups of figures, crowded together in various attitudes of misery and dismay, of mutual grief and affection, are vainly seeking to escape the coming destruction; a vessel is seen in the centre ready to be submerged; while above it appears the ark safely riding on the bosom of the waters, a type of the Church of Christ as the sole and sure refuge of the people of God amidst the final destruction of the earth and its works. The heavens above are dark, lurid, and charged with the symbols of wrath and vengeance.

The last compartment represents the sin and malediction of Ham, the first recorded transgression after the deluge. In correspondence with the whole tenor of the Bible, and no less with the recorded facts of profane history, the great artist intimates by this painful subject that, in spite of judgments and mercies, the natural tendency of mankind is habitual proneness to evil, and, therefore, that

without some fresh and signal interposition of divine mercy, there could have been no hope of their recovery and restoration. Such a conclusion prepares the way for the annunciation of a Saviour, a Restorer, a Redeemer; and to this point the principal remaining portions of the composition have reference.

Here, then, the scene changes, and the subjects and figures which remain to be noticed refer directly or typically to the coming redemption. At each of the four corners of the spandrils of the ceiling, is a large compartment symbolical of the perpetual presence of God with his Church and people. The first in dignity and interest is that of the Brazen Serpent—one of the most striking and impressive biblical types of redemption, and expressly referred to by Christ himself as emblematical of his propitiatory sacrifice. In consequence of its distance from the eye, and the want of light, it is difficult duly to appreciate the grand drawing and the tragic expression of this truly wonderful composition. The subject of the opposite compartment is the Punishment of Haman. It is justly lauded by Vasari as a signal triumph over great difficulties, created by the swell of the surface-wall on which it is painted, in spite of which, the figure of Haman, suspended on the cross destined for Mordecai, is a model of fine drawing, and of skilful accommodation of light and shadow to the circumstances of its locality. The corresponding com-

partments, at the two extreme corners of the chapel, represent David decapitating Goliath, and Judith bearing the head of Holofernes. Each is intended to be typical of deliverance and redemption.

All around the chapel, within large triangular compartments at the springing of the vault, are seated, each within a species of ornamental throne, formed by parts of the architectural framework already described, twelve majestic and colossal figures of prophets and sibyls. The prophets are seven in number, the sibyls five. Though little beyond fabulous existence and pretensions can be claimed for the sibyls, they are expressive symbols of important traditions.

"The style of these figures," says Lanzi, "is pronounced by Lomazzo, an impartial judge, because an artist of a different school, to be the finest in the world. The dignity of their aspect, the solemn expression of the eyes, a certain wild and uncommon cast of the drapery, and the attitudes, whether representing rest or motion, announce an order of beings who hold converse with the Deity, and whose lips utter what he inspires." *

Pagan antiquity ascribed to these female hierophants a prophetic spirit, and the delivery of oracles respecting the fates and revolutions of kingdoms. Plato speaks of one, Ælian of four, and Varro of ten, and his authority has been chiefly followed by

* Lanzi, Storia della Pittura. Epoca ii.

subsequent writers. The story of the Sibylline volumes purchased by Tarquin, and of their having subsequently perished in a fire, and the still earlier existence ascribed by Virgil to the Cumæan Sibyl, are facts familiar to scholars. That popular superstition continued, after the diffusion of Christianity, to cherish the fable of their prophetic power, is attested by St. Augustin and by Lactantius*, the latter of whom quotes from a Greek document various alleged predictions respecting the humiliation and resurrection of Christ, closely accordant with the facts of his history. To the Erythrean Sibyl, in particular, St. Augustin ascribes similar predictions, mingled with figurative allusions to the glories of his spiritual kingdom, and the great crisis of the universal judgment. These, and other passages, formed the staple of a work which appeared, it is supposed, in the second century, under the title of the Sibylline Oracles, and is most justly classed among the numerous forgeries of that period. They are made up, like some remarkable passages in the Pollio of Virgil, from the prophetic Scriptures, and from the literal facts of the evangelical history. The translation of the Bible into Greek, the frequent migration of Jews from the East into various parts of the Western Empire, bringing with them the national expectation of the speedy appearance of the Messiah, excited the at-

* St. Augustin de Civitate Dei, lib. vii. 107.; Lactantius, edit. Spark. Oxon. 1684, lib. i. p. 23, and lib. iv. p. 371.

tention of the pagan priesthood; and portions of these prophecies, especially of Isaiah, thus became mingled with the spells of their soothsayers and priestesses. It is pretended that the Cumæan Sibyl explained to Augustus the remarkable accordance between the history of Christ and the Scriptural prophecies respecting him. The expectation throughout the East, about the time of the advent of Christ, of the speedy appearance of a great deliverer, who should have universal dominion, is a fact specially stated by Suetonius and Tacitus, and is to be accounted for in the same way. Such appear to have been the grounds upon which the sibyls obtained a place in the Christian mythology of the Middle Ages, and became associated, subsequently, with prophets and apostles, in sculpture and painting.

The Nuremburg Chronicle records their proper number, attributes, and attire, the colours of their robes, and their alleged predictions.

The sibyls, therefore, are to be regarded, in the conventional language of Art, as hailing the promised Redemption; as expressing, on the part of the pagan world, a deep sense of the insufficiency of the light of nature, and therefore as uniting with the inspired prophets in pointing to Christ as "the Desire of all nations." In this symbolical character they are introduced by Michael Angelo, though he no doubt gladly availed himself of the picturesque effect imparted to his composition by

the variety and contrasts of their sex, attire, and attitudes.

The figure first in order of the prophetic series is that of Jonas; so placed, probably, from being a favourite and conventional type of the great doctrine of the Resurrection. Vasari lauds, in glowing terms, its marvellous foreshortening and high relief. He is represented as just cast out from the belly of the fish, and as looking up to heaven with wonder, joy, and adoration. To the left of Jonas is seen the mournful prophet Jeremiah, with his head declined upon his breast, weeping over the woes of his beloved Sion, which he has depicted in elegiac strains of such unrivalled pathos and tenderness. He may be supposed to be gathering comfort, amidst his sorrows, from contemplating the promises of her restoration, and the future glories and perpetual reign of the true David. As a work of art, this figure is impressively grand and dignified, and has all the relief of a statue.

Not less grand and impressive is the bearing of Ezekiel, whose fine features and venerable aspect reflect all the great qualities of a heavenly teacher. His uplifted head and hand appear to mark the forms and incidents of one of those wondrous visions which depict in his pages, in such strong contrast, the present humiliation and the future glories of Sion.

The prophet Joel follows; less poetical and idealised in his aspect than the two just referred to,

but fraught with the expression of animated and profound reflection, and a commission of high import. Before his eyes he holds a scroll, from which he may be supposed to be proclaiming his impressive declaration that the entrance into the kingdom of God is granted only to the repentant, and to the humble and contrite in spirit; or as enunciating the prophecy quoted by St. Peter, of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost.

The figure of Zacharias, which follows, is mild and majestic, dignified and venerable. He has a peculiar claim to the distinctive place assigned him over the entrance door of the chapel, since he not only sets forth in striking terms the perpetual priesthood of Christ, but declares in words, at once precise and poetical, that Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, and Jerusalem the scene of his mild glories and triumph during the day of his incarnation.

Next comes Isaiah, the Evangelical Prophet, who so uplifts the veil of futurity, by the precision and truth of his predictions respecting the coming redemption, as almost to touch the confines of actual history. His expressive looks and listening attitude bespeak profound attention to the whispers of a seraph who is pouring into his ravished ear those tidings of great joy to all people which it was his high privilege to enunciate.

The concluding prophet is Daniel; whose figure is second to none in dignity and interest. The eyes

of the prophet and sage look down upon an open volume, in which he may be supposed to have just recorded his expressive figurative symbols of the succession of the great empires of the world; of the final triumph of that of Christ; of the grand facts of a future resurrection and universal judgment; and of the glories of the redeemed. It is impossible too much to laud the dignified bearing, the masterly execution and foreshortening, and the rich colouring of this figure. The book which he is surveying is borne up by an attendant cherub, who is gracefully introduced within the drapery of his knees. The heart, the mind, the fancy of the prophet appear to be so instinct with inspiration, that, acting on the outward man, his very hair, sharing in the impulse, assumes the form and aspect of a lambent flame above his forehead.

The sibyls being poetic inventions can only be treated as such; but as works of art they merit scarcely less admiration than the prophets; and their traditionary character is powerfully impressed on their bearing and attitudes.

The Persian Sibyl, the first in order, represents the occult and subtle philosophy of the East. Her aspect is penetrating and acute; she is poring over the pages of a book, whence she may be conceived to be collecting truths of loftier import than anything to be found in the lore of Oriental sages. The attendant genii regard her, while thus employed, with silent awe and wonder.

The Erythrean Sibyl, the tenant of the renowned oracular seat of that name in Greece, follows. Her figure is graceful and easy, and has a martial aspect; while her fixed uplifted eyes appear to be inviting celestial discoveries.

Next comes the Delphic Sibyl, the representative of classical art and of the lofty poetry and philosophy of Greece. Her looks are fraught with intellectual expression, and her form and features with youthful grace and severe beauty: fit emblems of the noblest and most finished schools which the world has ever seen of taste and eloquence. To the beauty of this figure, the Cumæan Sibyl, a female of gigantic mould, and of a cunning but sagacious aspect, forms a striking contrast.

The Libyan Sibyl closes the series. The ease and grandeur of her attitude are striking. She is handing down a volume, which may be supposed to contain the fruits of her prophetic researches.

As types of inspiration, this series of figures will probably never be exceeded or equalled. They are fraught with poetical imagination and unrivalled powers of design. Though every figure is marked by individuality, and is a study in itself, unity of action pervades the whole series. All seem to concur in earnestly inviting the coming of the great Deliverer.

The lunettes depict the Scriptural genealogy of the Virgin and Christ, and form a succession of beautiful domestic groups which admit of com-

parison with the Holy Families of Raphael. The figures on each side of the arches below them form part of the same series, and are truly dignified in form, drapery, and attitude.

The pedestals which shut in the thrones or seats of the prophets and sibyls, are flanked by youthful Termini painted in imitation of sculpture, with a charming variety of attitude and freedom of pencilling. These pedestals are surmounted by coupled nude figures, between each of whom a bronze-coloured shield is interposed, on which are painted in bas-relief scenes and subjects of heroism, or miracle, from Jewish history. Bands of fruits and flowers are suspended between or gracefully descend below them. These figures bound the smaller compartments of the ceiling, and are unrivalled, in the history of design, as models of grand drawing and foreshortening, of sculptural relief and physical energy. Kügler suggests that they may be regarded as the genii of architecture. We would claim for them a meaning of more extensive import, by supposing them to represent the energies of physical, active life and industry,—the habits of the human race condemned to the toil of labour in consequence of sin,—the sources of productive wealth and power.

Thus it will be found that the subjects and sentiments to which expression is given on the vaults of the Sistine Chapel, are among the most elevated and interesting which can employ the human imagination.

The grand works of creation; the primeval history of man; the entry of sin into Paradise; the curse which it brought on this fair creation, and its awful consequences; the reversal of that curse, and the re-entry of life and immortality through the Gospel; the initiatory preparation for the incarnation of that divine Redeemer to whom all the prophets bear witness, and to whom at length every knee shall bow: such are the great subjects chosen by Michael Angelo to employ his creative pencil. We are carried back to the patriarchal age, to the mystic age of prophecy and poetry; and we have also before us a magnificent display of the mighty energies of physical force and industry. Sublimity of sentiment and unrivalled powers of design, undebased by any admixture of puerile superstition, here reign and triumph. Although damp, and time, and smoke, have not a little dimmed the lustre of this great work, it still produces (viewed on a fine day) a lively impression of its original harmony of colour and force of execution.

We should like to see the Sistine Chapel freed from the obscuring vapours of incense and wax candles, and measures taken studiously to guard its marvellous paintings from further injury and desecration.

We have shown in the preceding chapter, that the principal subjects of the Sistine ceiling, and in a

great degree those that are subordinate, have reference to the fall and redemption of man, and point to Christ as the "Desire of all nations." Nothing can be more grand and original than the style of design in which Michael Angelo has treated these subjects; but in their order and connection he appears to have followed, as Sir Charles Eastlake has shown in a learned dissertation, an established series of Biblical types and antitypes, familiar in his time; and which, we conceive, may be traced back, in their general spirit and intention, to the paintings of the catacombs of Rome and Naples; in other words, in the case of the earliest of them, to the latter end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. Many of those paintings are of a more recent date, and extend to the fifth century, or even beyond it. The earliest appear by their style and treatment to belong to the school of Roman classical Art in its decline. The paintings of the catacombs abound in symbolic emblems, and in cycles of typical scriptural representations, mostly taken from the Old Testament, and having their antitypes in the great events of the Gospel. They almost exclusively refer to Christ, to the triumphs of His kingdom, and to His glorification; to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to the certainty of a future resurrection; subjects, all of them, specially suited to comfort and support Christians under the bitter trials of persecution. Thus, in one of the principal chambers of the Ca-

tacomb of Calixtus, in the Via Appia, at Rome, among various cycles of this description, the following is found on the ceiling of the second cubiculum:—Abraham in the act of sacrificing Isaac, a type of the atonement; Moses striking the Rock, a type of the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit; Noah, after the deluge, receiving the Dove with the Olive branch, a symbol of reconciliation and peace; the Three Children in the fiery Furnace, with the fourth figure of the Son of God, an emblem of the presence of Christ with his suffering servants, and a type also of the resurrection; Baskets of the Manna from heaven, symbolical of the bread of life under the Gospel. These pictures are found in compartments around a centre on the ceiling, in which was originally some leading subject, now wholly obliterated. The general design and arrangement of this ceiling is classical in its taste, but only shadowy traces of the paintings we have described now exist.

This predilection for symbolism was perpetuated in the Church, as may be seen by an examination of the numerous mosaics to be found in Rome, in Ravenna, in Sicily, and in various cities of Italy. During the middle ages, the Church, as the above mentioned Dissertation shows, appears to have authorised a certain order and connection of subjects, to which Michael Angelo in the main conformed. It states that, among numerous MSS., both Italian and Transalpine, which set forth this order,

the most authoritative series is to be found in one denominated "Speculum Humanæ Salvationis," copies of which exist in the Imperial Library of Paris, in the British Museum, and elsewhere. The earliest of them are supposed to be of the twelfth century. This cycle commences with the Fall of Lucifer, and is carried on to the Last Judgment. Accordingly we find that Michael Angelo intended to have painted the former of these two subjects on the wall over the entrance door of the Sistine Chapel and on its two sides, and that he had prepared various sketches and studies for this purpose. The Last Judgment, on the altar-wall opposite, would, in this case, have appropriately formed the conclusion of the cycle, the intermediate subjects of which consist of the various paintings now seen upon and under the ceiling,—such as the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Prophets and Sibyls who predict the coming of Christ, his human genealogy from David through the Virgin, &c. Thus the mind of the spectator is led, from the earliest events recorded in Scripture, and from the prophecies, to their antitypes represented by the pictures on the walls below. These pictures consist of a grand cycle of subjects, forming a parallel between the old and the new Law, signified by the acts of Moses and of Christ. They were painted by various masters of celebrity, including Perugino, Luca Signorelli, D. Ghirlandajo, &c. Underneath

them, at a later period, were placed the tapestries from Raphael's cartoons, arranged in a defined order of chronology or association; thus carrying on the cycle of subjects to the triumphs of the Gospel by the conversion of the Gentiles. Hereby it will be seen that the connection on the whole was natural and noble. That it should have been marred by certain superstitious adjuncts is not to be wondered at, considering that the locality is a sort of sanctum of the Romish hierarchy. Thus we find that the altar was overhung by a tapestry, the subject of which was the Coronation of the Virgin, above which was an Assumption by Perugino. These subsequently gave place to the Last Judgment by Michael Angelo.*

In the cycles of the third, and of the earlier part of the fourth century, and even later, we find nothing that can be resolved into Maryology. The introduction of the figure of the Virgin in the catacombs is extremely rare; and when it occurs, it almost exclusively belongs to the subject of the Adoration of the Magi; and it is a remarkable fact that, in the series of mosaics, dating from A.D. 432 to 440, in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, at Rome, one of which represents the visit of the

* For many of the above particulars, and in part for the words which convey them, I am indebted to Sir C. Eastlake's Dissertation, which is to be found in his interesting work, entitled "Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts;" and also in Kügler's "Handbook of Painting," p. 310.

Magi, the infant Saviour is placed on a raised throne, as the object of worshipful homage, while the Virgin sits by him on one side, and Joseph on the other, quite in a subordinate position: behind are angelic attendants. On this point Kügler observes, that the Virgin Mary occurs so seldom in the earlier paintings of the catacombs, and then only subordinately, that in those times no particular type had been established for her.*

In that early period the various types of the Old Testament are referred almost exclusively to the Redeemer; but in the middle ages they are often interpreted as having also, in a secondary sense, a reference to the Madonna. Thus, on the authority already cited, we find, in manuscripts of the twelfth century, that the mediation of Esther with Ahasuerus for the Jews is treated as a type of the intercession of the Virgin; and that Judith with the head of Holofernes is made to be typical of the

* There is, it is true, in the catacomb already referred to, a figure supposed to be that of the Virgin, with uplifted arms, and with an infant in her lap. It is of a much larger size than the usual figures of the catacombs; and, by its style, appears to belong to the Byzantine epoch, being probably of the 5th or 6th century. M. De Rossi, the learned keeper of the MSS. of the Vatican, assigns this date to it. The author happened to be present when a zealous Roman Catholic expressed his opinion to that gentleman, that the uplifted arms of this figure implied the Virgin's intercession for the Church. "No," replied M. De R., "it is the attitude which symbolises prayer, and is to be found, as such, in numberless figures throughout the catacombs."

Virgin surrounded with the instruments of the passion. These are only specimens of similar interpretations still more farfetched and marvellous.

We have already shown, in the preceding chapter, that the four subjects in the angles of the Sistine, exhibiting great Jewish deliverances, were introduced as typical of redemption. That of the Brazen Serpent is prominently and most expressively such, as having been referred to, in this sense, by Christ himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH OF JULIUS II., AND SUCCESSION OF LEO X. TO THE POPEDOM.—HIS CHARACTER.—EMPLOYS MICHAEL ANGELO, AS AN ARCHITECT, TO DESIGN A FAÇADE FOR THE CHURCH OF SAN LORENZO, WHICH HE APPROVES, AND INTRUSTS ITS EXECUTION TO HIM.—THIS COMMISSION PROVED ONE OF THE GREAT MISFORTUNES OF HIS LIFE.—AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF PREPARATION THE POPE ABANDONS THE SCHEME.—GRIEF AND DISAPPOINTMENT OF MICHAEL ANGELO.—FAILURE OF A SCHEME, IN WHICH HE TOOK PECULIAR INTEREST, FOR ERECTING A TOMB TO THE MEMORY OF DANTE.—BRILLIANT CAREER OF RAPHAEL DURING THIS UNFORTUNATE PERIOD OF THE LIFE OF BUONARROTI.—DEATH OF LEO X.—IS SUCCEEDED BY ADRIAN VI.

DURING the two closing years of the life of Julius nothing could be more friendly and pacific than his relations with Michael Angelo. He had long ere this learnt duly to appreciate his moral courage and honesty of purpose, no less than his great and various talents; and he, oblivious of all past differences, honoured and loved the aged pope for his frank and friendly qualities, and also as his early patron and employer. In spite of all the trials and vexations attendant on the abortive tomb, he had reason indeed to feel grateful to the man whose potent will had forced him to paint the Sistine

Chapel, from which he had derived greater fame and glory than from any work in which he ever engaged.

Such were their mutual feelings as Julius approached his latter end. Before his death, he charged his nephews, the Cardinals Santiquattro and Anginense, to employ Michael Angelo in finishing the projected mausoleum upon a very reduced scale of expenditure. He accordingly prepared a design conformable to this intention, and thus (to use the expressive language of Condivi) he entered upon the second act of the Tragedy of the Sepulchre. Anxious to terminate it, as also to do honour to his patron's memory, he went vigorously to work, and procured sculptors from Florence to work from his designs on the less important parts. Even before the death of Julius (Feb. 21. 1513) he was thus employed; but his labours were speedily interrupted by a summons from the new pope, Leo X., on the plea that he required his immediate services.

The name of Leo X. has descended to posterity encircled with glory, as the Coryphæus of a golden age of art and literature. It was his good fortune to commence his reign at a moment when Europe was gathering in the richest fruits of that intellectual harvest which had been gradually maturing for upwards of three centuries, by means of the labours, researches, and sacrifices of innumerable scholars and literati, artists and poets. Though he

had done little himself, in comparison of his grandfather and father, in furtherance of this great movement, he was truly a man of letters, and patronised them for their own sake not less than from what he felt was due to his high position and to the name he bore. He was a man of mild disposition, and easy temper, and the favours he conferred were not a little enhanced by the amenity and grace of his manners. Though, in disposing of patronage, he occasionally selected individuals eminent for theological erudition, his delight was to bestow the honours and dignities of the Church on men of genius and classical learning, with little regard to their fitness and qualifications in other respects. They, in return, resounded his praises throughout Europe, and were profuse of the incense of adulation. As a politician, Leo was astute, subtle, and not unfrequently perfidious.* This he excused to himself by the difficulties of his position, which often made him tremble for the independence of his own states, and of Italy itself. Jealous sometimes of the designs of France, at other times of those of the Emperor, he cleverly intrigued between them, setting one against the other, and making light of his engagements with both, when it suited his interest. Not less ambitious than Julius II., his ambition was much more selfish. The leading object of Julius was the exaltation of the Church, and the

* Guicciardini, Hist. lib. xii. pp. 201. 215. 270.

extension of its temporal power; that of Leo was the particular aggrandisement of his own family.*

In pursuance of this object, he had, as Cardinal de' Medici, stifled, by the assistance of Julius and of the Spanish power, the restored liberties of Florence, and re-established the supremacy of the Medici in that city; acts against which her native chroniclers indignantly protest, and which admit of no justification.† He used his power as pope to rivet the chains of Florentine servitude, and he caballed with foreign powers to aid him in establishing, in the person of one of the members of his own family, a sovereign state, extending far beyond the bounds of Tuscany. But death put an end to this project by cutting off, one after another, all the legitimate offspring of Lorenzo de' Medici.

The sanction which he gave to the sale of indulgences formed the climax of that long train of causes which had been gradually preparing the way for the Reformation. So shamelessly was this traffic pursued, that the power of delivering souls from purgatory was even gambled for in taverns, or set up at auction to the highest bidder.‡

* Guicciardini, lib. xii. p. 183., where the historian refers to his intrigues to procure the crown of Naples for his brother Giuliano.

† Nardi, delle Hist. Fioren. lib. v. p. 256.

‡ "Aveva (Leone) sparso per tutto il mondo, senza distintione di tempi e di luoghi, indulgenze amplissime, non solo per poter giovare con esse a quegli, che ancora sono nella vita presente,

Whilst the storm gathering over the Church became every day more menacing, Leo's life (to use Sismondi's words) "was a perpetual carnival." The pleasures of the chase, the delights of voluptuous music, theatrical pastimes, and even low buffoonery, formed the charm of its existence; till at length the public burning of the papal bull in the streets of Wittemberg, by Luther, aroused him to a juster conception of the dangers which menaced the Romish Church, and of the moral courage and resources of him, who, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, had thus signally defied him.

The closing year of his life was cheered by the brilliant successes of the papal and imperial arms in Lombardy; but the pæan of victory proved only a prelude to the tomb. He died, A. D. 1521, in the 37th year of his age, not without suspicion of poison.

As yet Michael Angelo has only appeared before us as a sculptor and a painter; but it was as an architect that Leo X. sent for him.

The churches of San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito,

ma con facoltà di potere, oltra a questo, liberare le anime dei defunti dalle pene del Purgatorio; le quali cose non avendo in se nè verisimilitudine, nè autorità alcuna, perchè era notorio, che si concedevano solamente per estorquere danari dagli uomini," &c. &c. And in a few lines after he adds, that in Germany these indulgences excited special scandal:—"Dove a molti dei ministri erano vedute vendere per poco prezzo e giocarsi in sulle taverne la facoltà del liberare le anime dei morti dal Purgatorio."—GUICCIARDINI, *Hist.* lib. xiii. p. 109.

at Florence, were built by Cosmo de' Medici, from the designs of the great Brunelleschi. They are among the earliest and most superb specimens, in modern times, of the successful application of pure and correct principles of classical art to church architecture. The last-named, in particular, is highly picturesque and scientific in its interior arrangements, and charms by the harmony of its proportions. In the place of the small arch leaping from column to column, as seen in most of the early Christian basilicas, each of these churches displays a nave and aisles formed by Corinthian columns of noble dimensions, the capitals of which are surmounted by a rich and regular entablature, whence emanate arches of fine proportion and elegant finish.

Like others of the leading churches in Florence, their façades were, at the time of which we are writing, as now, altogether in the rough, and unfinished. As, however, that of San Lorenzo contained the remains of many of the Medici family, and was destined to receive more within a mausoleum to be added to the church, it was natural that Leo X. should have felt desirous of attaching to it a façade worthy of the fine style of the interior. It was with reference to this intention that Michael Angelo was summoned to the papal presence. According to Vasari, Raphael, Sansovino, and Giuliano San Gallo, were also required to furnish plans; but that of Michael Angelo obtained his

preference, and he was commissioned to carry it into immediate execution. Intensely occupied by the tomb of Julius, he entreated the pope to accept his design, and to allow him to pursue, undisturbed, a work, to the prosecution of which he was equally bound by duty and honour. "No, no," replied Leo; "leave it to me: I will engage to settle matters for you with the executors of Julius." This decision gave much offence to the two cardinals, and no small pain to the artist, which Leo endeavoured to allay by assurances that he would allow both objects to be prosecuted jointly at Florence. This, however, was rendered impossible, by his own subsequent instructions to Michael Angelo, to proceed immediately to Carrara, and give orders for the marbles requisite to carry into effect his plan. Thither he proceeded; but his operations had scarcely commenced, when a papal messenger arrived with a dispatch, stating that marble, said to be equally good, was to be obtained at a place called Seravizza, in the mountains of Pietra Santa, within the Florentine territory; and directing him to lose no time in ascertaining and reporting upon its quality. Upon his arrival there, he found the marble of an untractable quality, and calculated that the expense of constructing roads for its transport to the coast would be enormous. Unfortunately there were those about the pope who hinted that probably interested motives influenced Michael Angelo's objections, and, in particular, that

he was fearful of giving umbrage to the Marquis of Carrara. Leo, therefore, decided that the marbles should be raised at Seravizza, and the needful roads constructed.

Nothing could be more ill-advised than this decision. The country to be traversed was rocky in some parts, and in others marshy; money came slowly in; the expences and delays were very great. Years glided away in these preparatory labours, during which Michael Angelo had chiefly to act the part of an engineer, whilst he was cut off in a great degree from the society of his friends and from his professional avocations. At length a part of the marbles, including five finished columns, reached the sea-shore; but only one of them was ever conveyed to the piazza of San Lorenzo. In the meantime the ardour of Leo had cooled; he was engaged in a Lombardese war; his treasury became exhausted; he declined advancing money for the transport of more marbles; and the undertaking was abandoned.

What amount of compensation was adjudged to the much-injured artist for this vain sacrifice of time and labour is not mentioned. Michael Angelo was in the prime of life; and, in the natural course of things, the five or six years thus consumed would have been fruitful in works of durable fame and profit: he would have finished the tomb of Julius, to the completion of which he was no less bound by inclination than by honour; and in other ways

also he might have advanced the progress of Art both in Rome and Florence. Throughout these same years Raphael was pursuing a glorious course within the precincts of the Vatican, decorating its interior by the noble productions of his enchanting pencil, and extending his reputation far beyond the bounds of Italy. To Raphael the patronage of Leo was a source of the highest distinction and professional success. To Michael Angelo it proved the greatest misfortune of his life.

During the intervals of his engagements at Pietra Santa he was occasionally in Florence, and made some visits to Rome. He belonged to the Florentine Academy of Santa Maria Nuova, founded by the Medici family and newly endowed by Leo X. One of the leading objects of its meetings just now was to read and to discuss the poems of Dante, but their interest was also heightened by recitations of improviso poetry sung to the lyre or the guitar. Michael Angelo took great pleasure in these meetings; but we are not informed whether he was able so far to shake off his natural reserve and modesty, as to act the part of a performer.

Out of these meetings originated a scheme for doing honour to the name and memory of Dante, on the part of his fellow-countrymen, by transporting his remains, from the mausoleum in which they repose at Ravenna, to Florence, and of placing

them in one of its principal churches, beneath a magnificent monument, which should be adorned with appropriate sculpture. This proposition was embraced with ardour by the members of the Academy; a suitable address in correspondence with it was drawn up, and presented by them to Leo X., without whose influence and patronage there could be no hope of success. To the address were appended the names of the most distinguished literati of Florence, and among them was that of Michael Angelo, coupled with the generous offer of executing the sculptural decorations of the tomb gratuitously. The statue of Dante by Michael Angelo, and the allegorical figures with which he might probably have adorned it, would have formed, there can be no doubt, one of the greatest triumphs of modern sculpture,—so inspiring would such a subject have obviously been to the genius of the great artist.

The address was received by Leo with nothing beyond frigid civility, and the scheme was in consequence abandoned. Had the application succeeded, it would have roused Michael Angelo from a state of mingled apathy and anxiety into which he had fallen, in consequence of the injurious treatment he had received from the cold-blooded Leo.

On this point Condivi forcibly says: "Being thus detained at Florence, but finding the pope's ardour altogether spent, full of grief, he was long unable to apply himself to anything. He had

been driven from one vain and fruitless scheme to another, and reflected on the time which he had lost with the utmost dissatisfaction."

That such a man should have been so treated, is a great blot upon the memory of Leo. Michael Angelo, it is true, was too little of a courtier, and of too independent a spirit, to win upon him, as Raphael had done, by his graceful address, and by the boundless resources of his art, which readily ministered to every wish of his patron, not only in the higher departments of genius, but in all the luxury of fanciful and gay decoration. Common justice however, and common courtesy, might well have dictated a different course of conduct from that which we have been reviewing.

And yet we ought not, perhaps, to wonder at it, when we reflect, that he who acted thus was the man who loaded the depraved and malignant Pietro Aretino with the wealth of the Church, while he treated the intimate friend of his youth, and the brightest poetical ornament of his age, the celebrated Ariosto, when he went to pay his homage to him as pope, with supercilious kindness, followed by studied neglect. Roscoe, in spite of his wish to find an apology for Leo, has depictured the claims of the great poet and the heartless conduct of the pontiff in striking colours. Where so much was due to friendship and to genius, his coldness cut deep, and Ariosto has again and again alluded to it, with just but biting severity.

The needful stimulus to exertion was at length supplied to Michael Angelo, by the conviction that he was bound in duty and honour to resume and to complete the tomb of Julius II.; but scarcely were his arrangements completed, to remove to Rome for this purpose, when the Cardinal de' Medici, at this time Governor of Florence, and afterwards Pope Clement VII., interposed a fresh delay, by laying his commands upon him for the immediate execution of various monuments to the memory of members of the Medici family, to be placed in the sacristy of the church of San Lorenzo. He further required the plan of a library to be attached to the same church, in which should be deposited the invaluable collection of rare and beautiful manuscripts, originally made by Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici, and which, after its dispersion during the troubles of Florence in 1494, had most of them again come into possession of the family. The due consideration of the various details connected with such a commission fully occupied his mind, when intelligence reached Florence of the unexpected death of Leo X., on the first of December, 1521, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and the eighth of his pontificate.

During the preceding year, the world of Art had to lament the premature death of the illustrious Raphael, at a time when he was daily giving birth to fresh prodigies of his creative pencil.

Leo was succeeded in the papal chair by Adrian

VI., who had been tutor of Charles V., and of whom it has been said that it was long since the election had fallen on a man more worthy of his high and responsible office; "for Adrian was of spotless fame; upright, pious, industrious, and of such a gravity, that seldom was anything more than a gentle smile seen upon his lips, yet full of benevolent and pure intentions."* The frame and temper of this good man's mind formed the greatest possible contrast to that of the tasteful and magnificent but voluptuous Leo. A letter is extant in which he says how far rather he would have served God in his Priory of Louvaine than on the papal throne. Though not insensible to the attractions of painting as they existed in the naturalistic schools of Germany,—to which an Albert Durer, a Van Eyck, a Memlin, and others, have attached such high and deserved celebrity, and which greatly contributed to the improvement of the art of colouring at Venice and in various parts of Italy,—yet he had no taste whatever for the ideal and poetical, and therefore looked with cold indifference on the pictorial wonders of the Vatican. Neither painting nor sculpture in their highest qualities would ever have found in him, had he lived, a cordial patron; but he was prepared to wage unrelenting warfare against the pagan and mythological taste, which, proceeding originally from the

* Ranke's History of the Popes, cap. iii. p. 92.

Paduan school of Squarcione and Mantegna, had long since insinuated itself into that of Florence, Milan, and Parma. The Medici had in various ways lent their influence to the progress of this taste, which, whilst it had enhanced the grace, had by its abuse tended to corrupt the purity of Christian Art. The opposition of Adrian to this abuse was worthy of the office which he filled, and the character which he bore; but any anxiety as to the course he might take was of short duration, for, after a brief reign of eighteen months, he was seized by a mortal disease, and was succeeded on the 19th of November, 1523, by Cardinal de' Medici, who took the name of Clement VII. He was a natural son of Giuliano, younger brother of Leo X.

CHAPTER XV.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF RAPHAEL, AND A COMPARISON BETWEEN HIS GENIUS AND THAT OF MICHAEL ANGELO.

In the year 1520, Raphael was cut off in the prime of youthful manhood, and in the zenith of his brilliant fortune. That two such artists as himself and Michael Angelo should have been employed at one and the same time within the palace of the Vatican, and within a few yards of each other, upon works of such transcendant reputation, is so remarkable an event, that we feel impelled, after all that has been said of the one, to pay, before parting from the other, a passing tribute to his imperishable name and memory.

"Purpureos spargam flores et fungar inani
Munere." *

* In addition to my own intimate and repeated studies of the works of Raphael, I have examined, and in various instances profited by, in drawing up this sketch, Platner's Dissertation on his Genius, his Life by Passavant (with the aid of a German friend), that also by Sir Charles Eastlake, in his "Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts," and the very able notice of him by Kügler in his Handbook, to say nothing of Vasari and various others.

RAFFAELLE SANZIO.

BORN 1483_DIED 1520.

Born at Urbino, on Good Friday, March 29. 1483, he lost his mother in 1491. His father, Giovanni Santi, made a second marriage, but died in 1494. Neither his stepmother, nor his guardian, Don Bartolomeo, his father's brother, gained any influence over Raphael. Their quarrels made his home wretched; but he found a most kind friend and protector in his maternal uncle, Simone di Battista Ciarla, who won his entire confidence, and was looked up to by him as a father.* By his influence he was sent, in the year 1495, at twelve years of age, to Perugia, in order to become the pupil of Pietro Vannucci, called Perugino, who was at the head of one of the largest schools of painting in Italy.

Perugino was born A.D. 1446, and died in 1524. His first studies in Art were in the Umbrian school, probably under Niccolo Alunno, an artist of eminent merit. He afterwards pursued them at Florence, in the school of Andrea Verocchio, where he was intimate with Lorenzo di Credi, and acquainted with Leonardo da Vinci. The result of his Florentine studies may be traced in a grand picture in the Sistine Chapel, painted, as Kügler supposes, about 1480, the subject of which is Christ's Charge to St. Peter. It is one of his noblest works, both in composition and in spirited execution. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, he established

* Passavant's Life of Raphael, Appendix X. p. 529.

himself at Perugia, and in the treatment of his subjects fell back into the Umbrian manner. His best pictures display eminent beauties of sentiment and expression, combined with rich and transparent colouring. His saintly and angelic heads are often of surpassing beauty, and he imparts a charming relief to his figures by a soft purple atmosphere. His drawing is usually deficient in vigour and freedom, and in his latter works becomes feeble and faulty.

Among the pupils of this school, Raphael found himself associated with several who afterwards became eminent; in particular, with Lo Spagna, little known beyond the limits of Umbria, but great in all the fine qualities of Art; with Domenico Alfani, and with other members of his family; as also with Gaudenzio di Ferrara, whom Raphael first knew in 1502, and who afterwards followed him to Rome. A most intimate friendship united them, and there is much in his pictures which reminds us of Raphael.

Pinturicchio was probably at this time more a coadjutor than a pupil of Perugino.

The earliest traces of Raphael's pencil are to be found in some of his master's pictures, for, in consequence of the talents which he displayed, he quickly employed him as an assistant.

In 1500, he painted two procession banners for a church in Città di Castello, one of which is still to be seen there; the other passed into the collec-

tion of Cardinal Fesch. Other orders now came upon him; and one, in particular, for a large altar-piece representing Christ on the cross, surrounded by the Virgin Mary, St. John, and St. Jerome. Though somewhat feeble in drawing, it was of high promise in point of expression. It is now in the collection of Lord Ward.

Thence he returned to Perugia, and continued to study under Perugino, and to paint in his manner; either borrowing his ideas from his master's pictures, as in the case of his fine Adoration of the Magi, now in the Berlin collection, or by following his own imagination.

One of the earliest indications of his superior and independent powers, is to be found in the exquisite miniature-painting, known by the name of the Staffa Madonna, in the Casa Conestabile, in Perugia. The Virgin is reading: her pure, heavenly expression, is suited with the utmost taste to the calm, fairy landscape, with its tiny river, boat, and trees. The Child is looking into the book, and its action and attitude are lovely.

In the year 1502, he gave a still more striking proof of those powers, by aiding Pinturicchio with ten highly finished sketches* for his great work in the library of the cathedral of Siena, illustrative of the life of Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pius II.). This work ranks among the most eminent examples

* Passavant, vol. i. p. 71., gives the number and the list.

of the transition style, from the earlier to the more advanced stage of modern Art.

Vasari states that Raphael assisted his friend in painting various parts of these frescoes; but the best modern critics, including Passavant, maintain that he only furnished some of the designs.* Of these one is now at Florence, in the Gallery of the Uffizi; and a second, highly finished, and charming in composition, is at Perugia, in the Casa Baldeschi.

Among the pictures in the Sienese Library, there is one in which M. de Rumohr has rightly distinguished (says Passavant) the portrait of Raphael by the side of Pinturicchio. It is the picture which represents the scene when St. Catherine of Siena is made a saint; and, curiously enough, Pinturicchio stands a little behind the youthful Raphael, evidently gazing at him with admiration; a worthy monument placed by the elder master to his youthful fellow-pupil, whose remarkable genius he thus wished publicly to commemorate.

In 1504 we find Raphael again at Citta di Castello, painting the Sposalizio for the chapel of the Franciscans. It is now in the Brera Gallery at

* No one who has studied the frescoes of Pinturicchio in the cathedral of Spello, so rich in colour, so fine in taste and invention, can hesitate to regard him as having been fully equal to the great work which he undertook at Siena, even though their charm had not been aided by these designs of Raphael. He possessed, moreover, a superior knowledge of the mechanical process of painting in fresco; for few works in this line of art have suffered so little from time, damp, &c., as his.

Milan. In its composition it is a close imitation of a similar subject painted by Perugino, in 1495, for the Duomo di Perugia; but it rises far above its model in vigour of execution, in depth of colour, and in the grace and beauty of the heads. That of the Virgin is of angelic purity and loveliness.

The pictures of Raphael, up to the above date, bear upon them, more or less, the impress of Perugino's manner; but in the designs made for Pinturicchio, we find him displaying a taste and beauty of composition, and a dramatic power, which gave bright earnest of his future greatness. At Florence, which he first visited in 1501, he studied, as has been sh ¬, with equal interest and success, the fine models of modern and classical art with which that city is replete. Hence he acquired that mastery of design in which he himself was conscious he had hitherto been defective. It is interesting to trace, in his Florentine pictures, his growing triumph over every such disadvantage, till at length we find him forcibly combining graceful and correct drawing with the refined sentiment, the exquisite type of beauty, and the devout romantic mysticism, which he had brought with him from the school of Umbria. The favourite subjects of that school were Enthronements, Coronations, Assumptions of the Virgin; ecstasies and visions of St. Francis; Holy Families with attendant Saints; while those taken from Scripture were chiefly the Visit of the Magi, the Crucifixion, and Entombment.

The finest pictures of his first and second manner are to be found within the range of such subjects; and though their legendary spirit may often provoke a smile, we are enchanted with the purity and charm of their expression.

We are not, however, to suppose, that when he first came to Florence, he had seen nothing in Art beyond Perugia and its precincts. That the glorious ceiling of Fra Angelico di Fiesole, and of Gozzoli, in the chapel of San Brizio, in the cathedral of Orvieto, was well known to him, may be inferred from his fine fresco in the chapel of San Severo, at Perugia, painted a little later than the date of his arrival at Florence, for it is altogether in the spirit of that saintly painter: he had also visited Siena*, where, among other fine works, he beheld in those of Taddeo Bartoli, in the palace of the Signoria (A. D. 1407), much of that solemn sweetness and poetic grace which characterise his own pencil.

Our limits will not allow us to describe the series of pictures painted by Raphael between the years 1504 and 1508, when he was summoned to Rome by Pope Julius II.; but we will briefly allude to a very few of the finest.

The Madonna Gran Duca (as it is called) marks

* That he visited Siena may be inferred from a drawing of his, a copy of the marble group of the Three Graces, in the library of the Duomo of that city. — See Sir C. Eastlake's Life of Raphael, p. 214.

the growing transition from his first to his second manner. The Virgin has all the pensive sweetness and reflective sentiment of the Umbrian school, while the Child is loveliness itself. We think of Perugino still, but we think of him as suddenly endued with a purer, firmer outline, and more refined sentiment. The Madonna and Child enthroned, with the Baptist and St. Nicholas of Bari, painted for the church of the Serviti, at Perugia, now forms the gem of the Blenheim Gallery. In this exquisite picture we see, to use the words of Kügler, "the dreamy intensity of the school of Perugia, combined with the aim at a greater freedom and truth of nature, the result of assiduous study."* The picture of St. Catherine, now in the National Gallery of London, is a striking example of his power of imparting intense interest to a single figure. It has suffered much from time; but, even through its fady aspect, we still admire the saintly enthusiasm with which, leaning on the broken wheel, she seems to hail the ray of celestial light which opens heaven to her uplifted eye.

The last picture of his Florentine era to which we shall advert, is the Deposition from the Cross, painted in 1507, for the church of San Francesco

* This picture has lately been beautifully engraved by Mr. L. Gruner.

The centre picture of the predella, The Preaching of St. John the Baptist, is at Bowood, the seat of the Marquis of Lansdowne. It is very finely coloured, and, as Kügler observes, is in the manner of Masaccio.

at Perugia. This picture is finely drawn; great attention to anatomical precision is visible throughout. And it may here be remarked, that the assiduous care and attention with which he got up his subjects, is attested by numerous existing studies for various parts of this picture, and, above all, by an exquisite and highly finished drawing of the whole, by his own hand, preserved in the Florentine Gallery. He here appears a great master of design and expression, of profound pathos, and touching sentiment: but there is no attempt to imitate the grand execution of Michael Angelo; on the contrary, a slight degree of stiffness and labour still marks his pencil. The colouring is rich and transparent, and it forms one of the finest specimens, on the whole, of his second manner.

It was about the middle of the year 1508, that Raphael, then in his twenty-fifth year, was invited, as stated above, to the court of Pope Julius II., in order to decorate the palace of the Vatican with the works of his pencil. The subjects he undertook, far more comprehensive than any in which he had hitherto engaged, gave full scope to his great powers; the proximity of the Sistine Chapel, in which Michael Angelo was exercising his daring genius, inspired him with a noble emulation; the objects of ancient Rome fired his mind and his fancy.

Under these influences, the youthful painter commenced those great works which have so justly

immortalised his name. They cover the ceilings and walls of three apartments, and a grand saloon. Each wall in these rooms is occupied by one large picture, painted in fresco, the upper part of which is semicircular, corresponding with the form of the ceiling; the ceiling, again, is decorated with paintings, the subjects of which allude to those on the walls below; and even the dado throughout is replete with designs in chiaro-oscuro which have a similar reference. He painted the first of these pictures in the camera called "della Segnatura;" the subject is Theology, but it is best known by the name of the "Dispute of the Sacrament." It is the noblest and finest specimen of his second manner.

Its connection with the early school of Italian Art, of which it is the perfection, is indicated not only by its symmetrical arrangement, and by the affinity of its conception of the heavenly world with the types of Orcagna and Fra Angelico di Fiesole, but also by the free use of gold in the glories of the saints, and by highly wrought and careful finish. He commenced it, Lanzi states, at the right, and before he reached the opposite extremity was beginning to paint with more freedom of manner. Poetry, or Parnassus, with Apollo and the Muses in the centre, was painted next after Theology. The groups of which it is composed are finely imagined, and combined into a grand and harmonious whole. Yet it may be wished that a

place of honour, in advance of Homer, had been assigned to the sacred Bards of Sion, who, in unrivalled strains, proclaimed, in ages of darkness, the glorious perfections of the true God. In such case it is true that Apollo could not properly have been introduced as the central figure, but this would be no cause of regret, as it greatly fails in appropriate dignity. This picture is painted in what may be called a transition style, between his second and last manner; but every lingering trace of Perugino's stiff manner is banished from the School of Athens, his ensuing production, and painted on the opposite wall to Theology. This picture symbolises the schools of ancient philosophy, in a composition, the general arrangement of which is truly noble and harmonious, while its various groups and figures, fraught with characteristic expression, are admirably conceived and disposed. An architectural background, of singular beauty and depth, imparts a classical and picturesque charm to the whole. Plato and Aristotle, standing side by side in the centre of the picture, indicate, by their calm dignity and majestic bearing, the historical fact, that during the fifteenth century their philosophy was pre-eminent in the world of intellect. The subject of the fourth of the wall paintings in this room is Jurisprudence. The ceiling is beautifully adorned with allegorical figures of Theology, Poetry, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence, each in a round compartment; and between them are four others of an

oblong shape, which carry on the allegory. The figure of Poetry crowned with laurel is one of the most exquisite which even the pencil of Raphael has produced. The inspiration of genius blends in it with dignity and beauty. In each apartment the figures on the ceiling aid the effect of those on the walls.

Our limits will not allow us to be thus particular in describing the paintings of the succeeding apartments; we must therefore content ourselves with a brief reference to some of the finest. But it will be evident, from what has been stated of the just and philosophical connection between the principal wall-paintings and their ceiling accessories, that they display a depth of learning and research, both in the choice and treatment of the subjects, which can only be accounted for, as Sir Charles Eastlake observes, by supposing that the youthful painter availed himself, for this purpose, of the friendly aid of some of those eminent literati who at this time graced the papal court and the society of Rome. Some of these frescoes are as fine in colour as they are masterly in design. Witness, for instance, the miraculous Deliverance of St. Peter, which combines the most graceful drawing with the deep rich tones and the concentrated lights of a Rembrandt; while the opposite picture, the Punishment of Heliodorus, unites a tone of colour worthy of Titian, with forms of majesty and terror which remind us of the sublimity of Michael Angelo.

The industry of Raphael is no less marvellous than his art. During the six years preceding the death of Julius II., in which he was employed upon these laborious works, he also conceived and executed numerous altar-pieces, Holy Families, and portraits of the greatest finish and beauty; the time and labour essential to which, it might well be supposed, would themselves have given full employment to all his powers for even a longer period than his brief life included.

Upon the accession of Leo X. to the papal chair, A. D. 1514, Raphael's energies were still further pressed upon; and during the six years which intervened between that event and his own death, the series of his works may well excite equal wonder and admiration. He was assisted, it is true, by many able pupils, who painted from his designs; but the amount of toil which necessarily accrued to himself must have been prodigious. Moreover, upon the death of Bramante, he was appointed, in his place, architect of St. Peter's, and had to recover and reconstruct, from amidst the scattered papers of his deceased relative, his plan for the prosecution of that vast fabric.

It would be too much to attempt, within the limits of this notice, any detailed account of the various and beautiful productions which at this time employed his pencil within the halls and the loggie of the Vatican, in the Farnesina Palace, and in his own studio; but we cannot forbear from re-

ferring to his well-known Cartoons, painted by desire of Leo X., in order to be copied in tapestry. They comprehend some of his very finest compositions. It is the privilege of England to possess seven of them in the gallery at Hampton Court. Three are preserved only in tapestry, and are in the Vatican. They form altogether the most interesting and impressive specimens of pure historical Art in existence, being conceived with a correctness of sentiment, and executed with a masterly vigour, which Raphael has nowhere surpassed.

In the same spirit is conceived his grand altar-piece Lo Spasimo, so called from its having been originally painted for the convent of that name, near Palermo, and now in the Royal Gallery of Madrid. The subject is, Christ sinking beneath the weight of the Cross, from which Simon the Cyrenian is relieving him. Soldiers are ferociously urging him on, while the Virgin Mother, with outstretched arms, is pleading for compassion with all the eloquence of maternal grief. St. John and the Maries form an exquisite group around her. It is one of Raphael's most perfect compositions, but has suffered much from injurious restoration.

Yet powerfully and successfully as Raphael thus rose to the loftiest heights of sacred subjects, keeping them sufficiently within the bounds of truth and nature to excite the warmest sympathies of a spectator, yet idealising them by the force of poetic Art, he never appears more entirely in his appro-

priate element than when painting that class of pictures in the composition of which his youthful fancy first expatiated. Forms and images of exquisite grace, purity, and beauty, according to his own testimony, peopled that fancy; and therefore it is, that no painter has ever quite rivalled the charm of his Holy Families. We have alluded to the peculiar beauty of those painted in his second manner; and we will here briefly observe, that some of those of a later date rank among his finest works; as, for instance, the Madonna of San Sisto, that of Foligno, and the exquisite group of that "della Pesce" in the Royal Gallery of Madrid.

This picture, from its being in Spain, is unknown to the great majority of British travellers, except by engravings. In composition and expression it can scarcely be surpassed, and in colouring it is rich and brilliant. The Virgin is placed on a raised seat, with St. Jerome, a venerable and dignified figure, to her left. He bears an open book, on which the infant Saviour places one hand, while, by the inclination of the other and of his body, he appears to be welcoming the youthful Tobias, a charming figure, whom an angel of surpassing loveliness is conducting to the Virgin Mother.

Raphael was great in portrait, no less than in poetical and historical art; those of Leo X., of the beautiful Joanna of Arragon, that of Castiglione, and, not least, of Julius II., may be cited, in par-

ticular, as masterpieces in their way. The resolute and fiery character of Julius is so imprinted on this picture, as fully to verify what Michael Angelo said of it, that his attendants could not look at it without a thrill of something akin to terror.

The crowning production of his matchless art, the Transfiguration, wanted his last finishing touches when death seized upon him, A. D. 1520, at the early age of thirty-seven. He had worked upon it incessantly with his own hands; and his conception of deified humanity, in the figure of Christ, in this picture, is so sublime as almost to suggest the idea of a more than mortal pencil. The Saviour floats in a luminous atmosphere; majesty and benignity beam from his features; while his uplifted eyes and outstretched arms bespeak highest, holiest contemplation. Moses and Elias shine with radiance reflected from him on each side; while the three apostles below, overpowered by the glorious vision, shade their faces from excess of light. The scene of consternation which is passing below comes into striking contrast with the serene dignity of the figures just described. We forbear any detailed remarks upon the striking beauties of the group which composes it; but will just observe, that the want of unity which has often been objected to in this picture, is obviated by the apostolic personage who points with his finger above, and who seems to say to the terrified relatives of the ma-

niac, "Wait a little, and one will come thence who shall achieve for you *that* which is beyond our power."

Every honour that admiration and affection could lavish on the shrine of departed genius was paid to the memory of Raphael. Previously to the obsequies, his form, so graceful and elegant, was laid out for public view in his painting-room, and behind it the unrivalled work of art upon which we have been expatiating. This production of his immortal pencil, thus brought into contrast with his cold, lifeless clay, melted every beholder into tears.

He was buried in the Pantheon, as Vasari has stated, a fact which was so brought into doubt about twenty years ago, that an examination was made for his tomb in the year 1833, under the auspices of the Prince Odescalchi, beneath the particular altar of that sacred edifice which was supposed to cover it, and where his skeleton was discovered in a wonderful state of preservation. The skull, though small, was of a beautiful form; and the teeth were complete and of a pearly whiteness.

As respects the much debated question, in what degree Raphael was indebted, as an artist, to Michael Angelo, extravagant things have been said, on both sides, by their respective admirers; some maintaining that his style would not have risen above mediocrity had he not seen and profited by

the grand manner of Michael Angelo, while others will scarcely admit that genius like Raphael's ever needed such an impulse.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, for instance, a high authority, has gone so far as to say "it is to Michael Angelo that we owe even the existence of Raphael: it is to him that Raphael owes the grandeur of his style. He was taught by him to elevate his thoughts, and to conceive his subjects with dignity." Now, who can subscribe to this statement who has studied the fine designs which, as has been shown, Raphael prepared for Pinturicchio so early as the year 1502; and still more, the grand and impressive fresco of Christ in Glory, painted by him, in the chapel of San Severo at Perugia, in the year 1505; that is to say, in each instance, before he had seen the Cartoon of Pisa?

This fresco is an anticipation, in its style and conception, of the finest part of his Dispute of the Sacrament in the Vatican, and brings him into contrast with Perugino, who painted the lower part of the picture, and whom he here leaves far behind.

But, although we conceive Raphael would have been a painter of the highest grade even had there never been a Michael Angelo, he would probably, in such case, have failed to rise to the full height of his acknowledged glory. Was not this the conviction of his own mind when, in a spirit of beautiful candour, he thanked God that he had been born

in the age of Buonarroti?* Examples of direct imitation are chiefly confined to his Isaiah, in the church of St. Augustin, in Rome; to his figure of the Deity dividing Light from Darkness, in the Loggie of the Vatican; and to his Vision of Ezekiel, in the Pitti Palace,—a subject akin to which is also introduced on the ceiling of one of the halls of the Vatican. The two first of these imitations must be deemed failures, as compared with their respective models in the Sistine Chapel; but not so the third, which is Michael Angelesque throughout. If it be true, as is said, that he selected the Fire of Borgo as a subject for one of his paintings in the Vatican, in order to prove that he could enter the lists with Michael Angelo in the science of the nude, he cannot be said, in this instance, to have succeeded; for, although the drawing displays much anatomical learning, and the subject is treated with the utmost beauty and pathos, there is a want of freedom and ease in the muscular action and movement of the figures very unlike the masterly precision and energy of those of the Sistine.

Whether Raphael beheld the Sistine ceiling before it was finally opened to public view in 1512, is a question which has been hotly contested. As to the story of his having enjoyed a furtive view of it, by favour of Bramante, during a temporary absence of Michael Angelo from Rome, it is

* Condivi, cap. lvii. p. 68.

now altogether exploded, and on good grounds; but both Vasari and Condivi* state, in the most express terms, that it was opened for a short time when only half finished, in consequence of the impatience of Julius II. to judge of its effect; and that all Rome flocked to a sight of it, and that among those who thus saw it was Raphael, and that he immediately after painted in a grander manner. We know not how to doubt a fact thus circumstantially related by both biographers†; and we venture to conclude that this first and brief view took place in one of the last months of 1510, or early in 1511; therefore, before Raphael had commenced the School of Athens, the first of his works in which we find all traces of Perugino's manner absorbed in the grander style which his works thenceforth display.

Luigi Crèspi states, that after seeing the prophets of the Sistine, he obliterated altogether his figure of Isaiah in the church of St. Augustin, and repainted it, as we now see it, in the style of Buonarroti.

Shortly after, he painted the sibyls and prophets in the Chiesa della Pace; but here, though the subjects remind us of the Sistine, and we trace a greater breadth of manner than in his former works, there is no attempt to rival the style of

* Vasari, Vita di M. Angelo, p. 38. Condivi, cap. xxxvii.

† Quatremère de Quincy and Duppa, in their Biographies of Michael Angelo, coincide with the author on this point.

Buonarroti, but the subject is treated throughout with the dignity, grace, and beauty so peculiarly his own.*

The spirit in which he studied and profited by Michael Angelo is ably summed up by Sir Charles Eastlake. "As a proof," he says, "of the reality of Raphael's admiration of Michael Angelo's genius, it will be sufficient to mention that several drawings exist, copied by Raphael himself from the Sistine ceiling. One of these, the Expulsion of Adam and Eve, was in the Lawrence Collection; another is at Holkham.

"Such imitations, even when very direct, seem to have been considered as the sincerest tribute of admiration. With an original genius the impulse lasted only a short time, and was a sort of study of the characteristic excellence of a rival; the practice was a wholesome change of ideas, and the result of enlarged perception of the nature and powers of Art."

What Raphael really owed, then, to Michael Angelo, was, we conceive, greater breadth of manner, and a grander style of drawing and conception. In mastery of design, in forms of severe beauty, and in the domain of the sublime, the ideal, and the terrible, the great Florentine is without a rival, — like the eagle,

> "Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air."

* See Lettere Pittoriche, vol. ii. p. 406. &c.

Raphael was fully sensible of this, and therefore, excepting in the rare instances alluded to, attempted not to follow him thither; but he fully makes up for any inferiority in these great qualities, by excelling his rival in all that wins upon the sympathies of the human heart,—exquisite beauty, refined tenderness, and grace, united with a dignity and grandeur less imposing, but more natural.

In masterly composition he has never been surpassed, whether we regard the significant conception of his subjects, his rich invention, and the union of perfect symmetry with endless variety in the arrangement of his groups. The figures, in their movements, always form fine lines; and the result, while it appears natural or accidental, is always a consequence of deep study and science.* Expression, or, in other words, the language of the soul and mind, imprinting itself on countenance and gesture, is also his in an eminent degree.

Raphael's comprehensive mind adapted itself to the most varied subjects. He is greatest of all in sacred Art; but the paintings of the Farnesina Palace, chiefly executed by his pupils from his designs, prove how readily he could adopt the types of heathen Mythology. They are fraught with invention and poetic beauty; but his deities are not moulded according to the refined models of the

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even the grandeur of Julius II. stooped to do him honour, and the generosity of Leo X. loaded him with favours."

Discussions upon the relative merits of the two great artists, to whom we have thus been alluding, frequently took place in their lifetime. This was natural, in consequence of the almost simultaneous display of their works within the Vatican; and a remarkable instance of it is recorded by Sebastian del Piombo, in a letter addressed by him, in the year 1512, to Michael Angelo. He tells him of a recent interview with which he had been honoured by Julius II., and of the pope's disposition to employ him in painting an apartment in the Vatican; and how he had fired at the idea, and assured his Holiness that, aided by Buonarroti, he would engage to effect wonders. "I don't doubt it," replied the pope; "for you have all profited by him. Look at the works of Raphael, who, after seeing those of Michael Angelo, relinquished the manner of Perugino, and approached as near as he could to that of Michael Angelo. But he is terrible, as you know, and nobody can get on with him." *

It was the fashion for the devotees of Raphael to assert, that he left his great rival far behind in grace and beauty, in colour and expression, and

* Carteggio inedito d' artisti, dal Dott. Gaye, tom. ii. p. 489. 8vo. Firenze, 1840. This letter was copied by Gaye from the original in the possession of the President C. Buonarroti. It is written in the Venetian dialect.

that even in design he was little his inferior. These were the trite sayings of artists who could much more readily comprehend the enchanting and attractive qualities of the one than the sublime conceptions, the profound learning, and the severe beauties of the other. There were, however, various artists of a high order, who were no less the devotees of Michael Angelo, and whom he occasionally assisted with designs and cartoons calculated to show that he was fully capable of combining grace and beauty with dignity and elevation. The principal of these were Sebastian del Piombo, originally a pupil of Giorgione, whose style of colouring he felicitously adopted; Daniele da Volterra, whose finest pictures are in the Michangelesque manner, which, however, he carried out with much of independent power; Jaçopo Carrucci, called Pontormo; and Marcello Venusti.

The rivalry which existed between the scholars and admirers of these great men, extended in some degree to themselves. The one felt that he was unequalled in the power of design, and was therefore nettled by the undervaluing comparisons made between him and Raphael; the latter felt indignant when he heard his power of drawing the human frame declared to be in no degree comparable to that of Buonarroti. Michael Angelo laboured also under an impression that Bramante and Raphael had injuriously caballed against him

with Julius II. He has given very strong expression to this conviction in a letter, some passages of which will be found in the Appendix.* He also himself conceived that Raphael's artistic obligations to him were greater than they really were. Hence arose an unfortunate jealousy between them, and a distance, which was heightened by the natural reserve and susceptibility of Michael Angelo. When he wished to show that he could, if he would, rival the softer graces of Raphael, there was none among his followers whom he so readily employed in painting from his designs as Sebastian del Piombo, his object being to unite his fine Venetian colouring with his own † grand manner. In this he succeeded in many instances. A picture of this description is in existence, the subject being the Sleep of the Infant on the Virgin's lap, with St. Joseph and St. John reverentially regarding him: it may justly be compared to the most beautiful of the Holy Families of Raphael. The figure and aspect of the Virgin, though highly dignified, are graceful and beautiful; the sleeping Child is a model of fine drawing; the St. John, peeping over, with his finger on his lip, is full of sweet sentiment; and the St. Joseph is a softened repetition of one of the grandest prophetic figures of the Sistine Chapel—

* Appendix V. Appendix VI., on the places occupied by the Tapestries of the Cartoons of Raphael in the Sistine Chapel, is by Chevalier Bunsen.

† Vasari, vol. ii. p. 10., Vita di S. del Piombo.

the Jeremiah. The contours of the figures are extremely graceful throughout, and the colouring is in the fine style of Giorgione.*

There is also another picture of the same class, from the design of Michael Angelo, which was formerly in the Barberini Gallery at Rome, in which Sebastian del Piombo is supposed to have been aided in parts by the pencil of Michael Angelo himself. He originally made the design for his friend, the celebrated Vittoria Colonna.† The subject is a dead Christ, supported by angels on each side, and behind by the Virgin Mary, seated in front of the cross. Her outstretched arms and uplifted eyes are expressive of sublimated grief, such as seems to realise the Evangelical prophecy concerning her,—"A sword shall pierce through thine own heart also." (Luke ii. 35.)

The body of the Christ, whose head declines upon his breast, is a grand work of Art; and the two angelic figures, exquisitely drawn, each supporting an arm of the Saviour, seem to act their part with sympathetic tenderness.

In the cathedral of Viterbo, the same subject is treated by Sebastian del Piombo, from the design of Buonarroti, in a picture of great pathos and admirable drawing. Here the body of the Christ is

* This picture and the next mentioned are described in Dr. Waagen's Art Treasures, vol. iii. pp. 187–8., under head "Blaise Castle."

† Condivi describes it, cap. 63.

stretched out in death, and the Virgin stands above it in devout contemplation.

The fine picture of the Scourging of our Lord, in the church of San Pietro Montorio, is another work, painted by Sebastian del Piombo, from the design of Michael Angelo. In this instance, Vasari tells us that he drew the outline of the figure of the Christ, upon the wall, in chalk, with his own hand. In expression, it is truly admirable, and its meek, submissive aspect comes into striking contrast with the ferocious looks of the savage executioners. We can also believe it to have originally been a model of fine colouring, but time has greatly blackened the shadows, and dimmed the once golden lights. It is painted in oil colour.

In the four pictures above referred to, the designs are wholly by Michael Angelo; but in the grand altar-piece of the Resurrection of Lazarus, now in the National Gallery of London, it is generally supposed that Michael Angelo supplied only parts of the design, and in particular, the group of Lazarus, his sister, and others. To us it appears that the drawing of the remainder is by no means in the style of Buonarroti: in the Lazarus, who is looking at Christ, the expression of returning life and of inquiring astonishment, as also the quality of the drawing, are worthy of him.

In colouring, Sebastian is in general admirable; and in portrait he is truly great. We will take this occasion of alluding to the three other eminent

artists, who, like Sebastian del Piombo, imitated the style, and often painted from the designs of Michael Angelo, though at a somewhat later period than the æra of Raphael.

Daniele da Volterra had much more of native and original genius than Sebastian, but was very inferior to him in colour. His greatest work (and Niccola Poussin was accustomed to assign it the first place after the Transfiguration) is a Deposition from the Cross, in a chapel of the church of the Trinità de' Monti at Rome. This picture is so much injured by time, and bad restoration, that it is only a faint shadow of its former self; but the composition is extremely fine, and the drawing, where it has escaped the restorer's touch, is no less so. The plastic feeling, and anatomical perfection of the descending body of the Christ, have rarely been surpassed. It is altogether in the style and manner of Michael Angelo; and that both it and the general conception are probably his, may be inferred from the painter's having introduced his portrait, with a mirror in his hand, close to the picture, as if to intimate that he beheld in it a reflection of his own design. The ease and vigorous action of the figures who are letting down the Saviour's body, and the pathos of the whole group, cannot be too highly extolled. Another fine picture by the same great artist, the subject being the Entombment of Christ*, is also

* In the collection at Blaise Castle.

said to have been designed by Buonarroti, and the drawing throughout seems to attest his pencil.

So promising were the early productions of Jacopo Carrucci, called Pontormo, as long as he studied under Andrea del Sarto, that Michael Angelo said, "If this young man's life is spared he will raise our Art to the skies." But when he afterwards painted from his own resources, he drooped into caprice and mannerism. Yet the genius of Michael Angelo, whenever he came into contact with it, seemed to rekindle his earlier aspirations, and he was fond of painting from his designs. His finest work of this description is a picture of Venus kissing Cupid, in which he has combined his own graceful colour with the grand outline and science of Buonarroti. There are two examples of this subject ascribed to him, one in Kensington Palace, the other in the Berlin Gallery.

Marcello Venusti was another artist, who frequently painted from the designs, or imitated the manner, of Michael Angelo. His execution is laboured, but effective. The galleries of Rome possess many of his works, which are usually on a small scale. The finest of his pictures is an elaborate copy of the Last Judgment, painted with a force and fidelity of expression which are truly admirable: it is now in the Royal Gallery at Naples.

END OF VOL. I.

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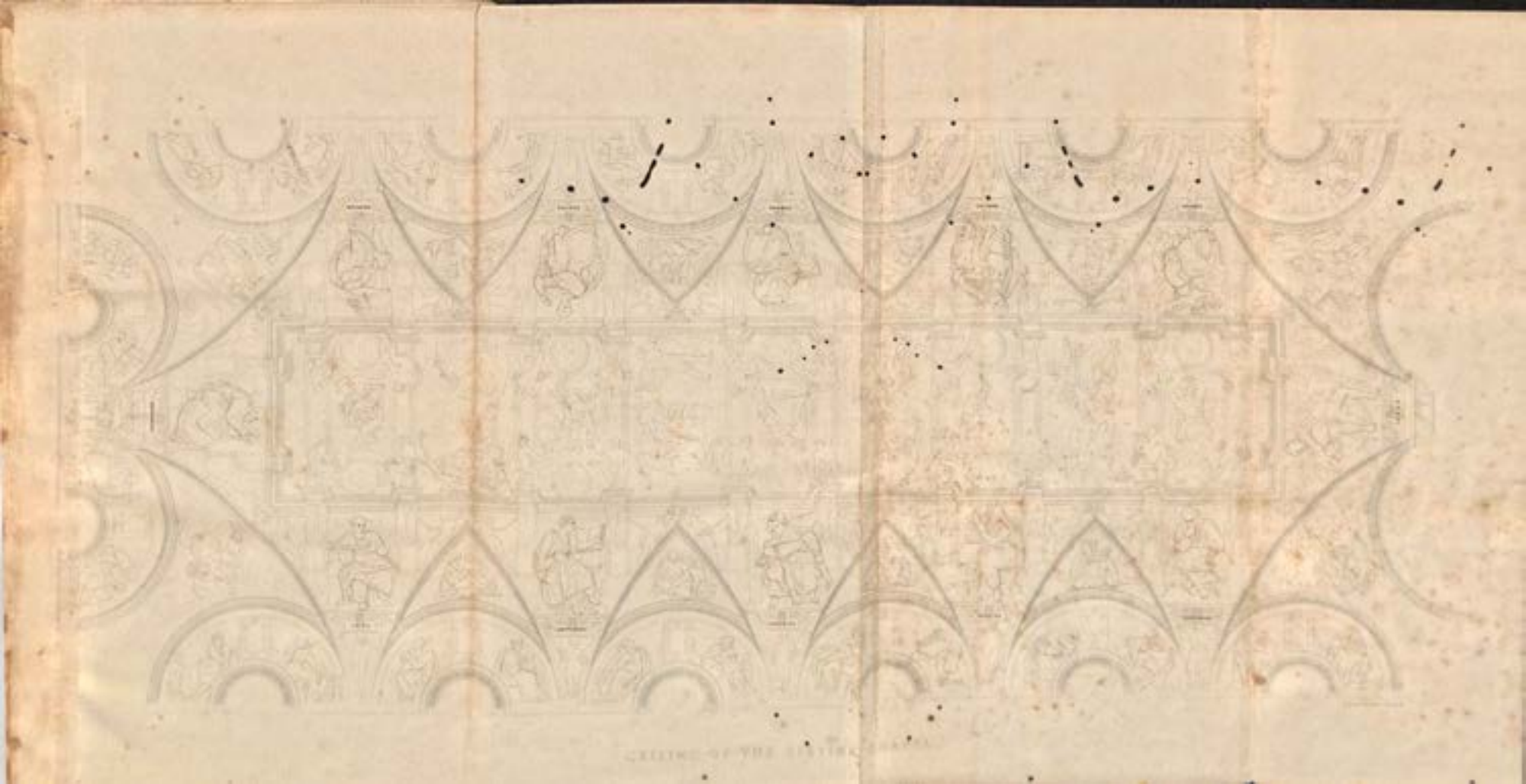

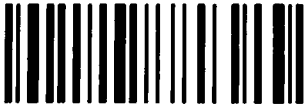
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